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# CELTIC MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGION.

BY

ALEXANDER MACBAIN,

M.A., F.S.A. Scot.

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*PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.*

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# PREFACE.

THE following work, all save from page 105 to the end, appeared in the *Celtic Magazine* in 1883-4, and is here reprinted from the *Magazine* type. Hence it is that it is reproduced "with all its imperfections on its head," and the critic must be asked, before condemning details at least, to note the list of corrections appended to this preface.

The intention of this series of papers was to popularise the subject of Mythology, and to apply its principles to the elucidation of Celtic beliefs, tales, and traditions. I wished to place clearly before my Gaelic brethren the exact position which the religious beliefs of the Celts held in the European kinship, to clear up the misty subject of "Druidism," and to reconstruct, from the shattered materials to hand, the Pantheon of their Gaelic ancestors. This I undertook, knowing that in the last part of my object—the rehabilitation of the Gaelic Olympus—my results must only be tentative, for the material for reconstruction is difficult to deal with, and much of it is in MSS. unedited.

Since these papers began to appear in print, events have travelled with more than usual rapidity both in the field of general and of Celtic Mythology. It was last year that Mr Andrew Lang delivered his lively attack against the "orthodox" school of mythologists, and it was also last year that M. D'Arbois de Jubainville's important works on Celtic Literature and Mythology appeared. Mr Lang's attack has certainly driven the older school from several of their positions, but he has by no means overthrown either the importance of language in the development of myth, or the fact that the sun, the sky, the powers of wind and storm, and the change of day and night were the most prominent factors in the creation of the deities and powers of the ancient mythologies. Despite Mr Lang, mythology is, nevertheless, a dramatic view of the course of nature,

and a personification of its forces; and language has been a most potent force in the development of myths, because it stereotyped older epithets and expressions, which in later ages were misunderstood. Mr Lang has, however, shown that language is by no means so much the cause of myth as Max Muller and Cox believe, and that many of the myths claimed as Aryan are found also among barbarous and savage tribes all over the world. What Mr Lang has proved in regard to the origin and growth of mythology does not in the least invalidate the arguments and conclusions in the following papers, for the reason that, on the whole, I followed Mr Tylor's views on Mythology, and he, like Mr Lang, is an anthropologist. But what Mr Lang has invalidated in these papers of mine is the relation in which, following Max Muller, I held myth and folk-tale. Mr Lang has made it clear in his "Custom and Myth," and better still in his introduction to Mrs Hunt's translation of "Grimm's Fairy Tales," that the old idea that the fairy or popular tale is a broken-down myth is so totally wrong, that the opposite is nearer the truth. Indeed, Mr Lang holds that the myth—the god-tale—is but a sublimated folk-tale. That, however, is not often the case. Folk-tales have been raised to myths; the Jason myth is a case in point; but myths have often, and, indeed, with change and advance of religion, they have generally become folk-tales. Another thing that Mr Lang has done is to place the folk-tale on a proper way towards explanation. The "orthodox" belief is that the hero of the folk-tale must be the sun-god, and that many incidents, including the beast-form he assumes, arose from "disease of language," that is, from after ages misunderstanding the epithets applied to the sun-god and to the incidents, by a previous age. This view is untenable. Mr Lang shows that savages now believe in men being transformed into animals; in fact, that we are kin with animals as we are with one another. Transformation of men into beasts is a fixed article of savage faith. It may be caused by witchcraft spell, or through the Pythagorean metempsychosis. Then he finds several incidents explained by savage customs, more especially the prohibitions or taboos we meet with in these tales. He instances the tale of "Cupid and Psyche," the parallel of the "Hoodie" tale at the beginning of these papers; in that tale the etiquette is that the wife must not

see the husband unclothed; if she does, he must leave her. Similar customs still exist among savages, and are not unknown in modern Europe. In the tale of the "Hoodie," there are evidently two prohibitions: first, the inmates of the house must not sleep during the first night of a child's existence; and secondly, the wife must not make mention of a "comb" to her husband. The comb's mythic connections are attested by its frequent appearance on sculptured monuments; and the vigilance during the first hours of a child's existence was of course necessary because of the evil powers that hovered around. The fairies were, in the Highlands, a constant source of dread to baby life; and the special custom of watching during the first night of the child's life, while old shoes ("logaisean") were kept burning to ward off the fairies, prevailed in the Highlands within the memory of people still living. The story was, therefore, as Mr Lang would say, invented to account for and inculcate the observance of these prohibitions.

M. D'Arbois de Jubainville's work on the "Irish Mythological Cycle and the Celtic Mythology" appeared too late to be of any assistance to me in the reconstruction of the Gaelic Olympus. I am glad to note that, in so tentative a matter, we agree so far. He points out the doublets in the Mythological cycle: Cæsair—Partolan, Tuan Mac Carill—Finntan, &c. Partolan he compares to the "Silver Age" of Hesiod; the Nemedians are the "Iron Age"; and the Tuatha-De-Danann represent the "Golden Age." But he takes stop-gaps like Cæsair, Partolan, and Nemed too seriously; nor is the order of the ages comprehensible. The Fomorians who, he observes, co-exist with all the invaders, he regards as the Titans, living far away in the Isles, and he further regards them as the powers of death, darkness, and evil. The Fer-bolgs are the inhabitants of Ireland previous to the Celts or Milesians, who conquered and absorbed them. The Tuatha-De-Danann are the gods of the Gael. The Dagda (=dago-dēvos, "bonus deus") represents Zeus or Jove; Luga corresponds to Mercury; Ogma corresponds to Lucian's Hercules Ogmius; Diancecht is god of Medicine; Gobniu answers to Hephaistos (Vulcan); Angus, son of the Dagda, he does not characterise. The god Manannan he notes as living far away, king of the land of promise, who supplies the gods with food, raiment, and plea-

sure, but he does not say how he stands in the Pantheon. Cuchulain he finds to be the counterpart of Heracles in descent and character. A remarkable feature of the Pantheon is the number of triads—three gods joined together—which appear. These are the three last kings of the Tuatha, the three sons of Danann, the three Fomorian chiefs, and so on; while Gaul presents Lucan's triad of gods, and Wales abounds in all sorts of triads.

The authors to whom I am most indebted are Mr Elton ("Origins of English History") and Professor Rhys ("Celtic Britain" and in *Academy.)* I mention also Mr Fitzgerald's article on the "Ancient Irish" in *Fraser's Magazine* for 1875, and his articles in the *Revue Celtique.* The materials—tales and myths—are chiefly from Guest's "Mabinogion," Skene's "Ancient Books of Wales," Joyce's "Celtic Romances," Kennedy's various books, O'Curry's Lectures, the *Revue Celtique,* Campbell's "Popular Tales," and editions like Windisch's "Irische Texte."

Inverness, October 1885.

# ERRATA.

## MISPRINTS.

Page 16, line 34—For "mythoporic," read "mythopoeic."
" 28, " 23—For "push," read "pushed."
" 29, " 7—Read "Celtic-speaking."
" 58, " 27—Delete "S."
" 89, " 3—For "it," read "in."
" " " 2 of poetry—Read branches', and delete comma.
" " " 20 of poetry—For "looped," read "lopped."
" 90, " 8—For "masters," read "master."
" 94, " 13—Insert "his" before "history."
" 104, " 11—For "Granna," read "Granua."

## CORRECTIONS.

Page 17, line 33—Delete reference to "Dagda."
" 18, " 1—Delete "Greek, helios."
" " " 13—Delete "Vata, the Gaelic *gaoth*."
" 25, " 36—Delete reference to "Aigean," and "Aegean." "Aigean" is *oceanus* borrowed.
" 26, " 1—Delete "black." See Kuhn's Beitraege, vol. viii., p. 44.
" 30, " 22—After "Century," insert "B.C."
" 32, " 22—For "is," read "are."
" 33, " 17—For "five," read "fifteen."
" 56, " 22—For "Mabinogion," read "Mabinogi." So, too, at page 83, line 21.
" 70, " 27—Delete "Frecart."
" 90, " 5 from bottom—Insert "Mercury and" before "Taranis."

# CELTIC MYTHOLOGY.

THE field of Mythology, strictly defined, embraces the fabulous events believed in by a nation and the religious doctrines implied in these. But the term is for convenience' sake extended so as to include the kindred subject of folk-lore. Now folk-lore includes all those popular stories of which the fairy tales of our nursery are a good illustration, and where the religious element implied in Mythology is absent. The term Celtic Mythology, in these papers, is understood, therefore, to include the popular traditions and legendary tales of the Celts, the fabulous actions and exploits of their heroes and deities, the traditions of their early migrations, their fairy tales, and the popular beliefs in regard to the supernatural world. The scope of the discussion will include an introductory section or two on the general principles of Mythology—its cause and spread, and the connection of the Mythology of the Celts with those of the kindred nations of Europe and Asia.

## CHARACTER OF MYTH.

"There was once a farmer, and he had three daughters. They were washing clothes at a river. A hoodie crow came round, and he said to the eldest one, "*M-pos-u-mi*—Will you marry me—farmer's daughter?' 'I won't, indeed, you ugly brute; an ugly brute is a hoodie,' said she. He came to the second one on the morrow, and he said to her, "*M-pos-u-mi*—Wilt thou wed me?' 'Not I, indeed,' said she; 'an ugly brute is a hoodie.' The third day he said to the youngest, "*M-pos-u-mi*—Wilt thou wed me—farmer's daughter?' 'I will wed thee,' said she; 'a pretty creature is the hoodie.' And on the morrow they married.

"The hoodie said to her, 'Whether wouldst thou rather that I should be a hoodie by day and a man at night; or be a hoodie at night and a man by day?' 'I would rather that thou wert a man by day and a hoodie at night,' says she. After this he was a splendid fellow by day and a hoodie at night. A few days after he got married he took her to his own house.

"At the birth of the first child, there came at night the very finest music that ever was heard about the house. Every one slept, and the child was taken away. Her father came to the door in the morning, and he was both sorrowful and wrathful that the child was taken away.

"The same thing, despite their watching, happened at the birth of the second child: music—sleep—and stealing of the child. The same thing happened, too, at the birth of the third child, but on the morning of the next day they went to another house that they had, himself and his wife and his sisters-in-law. He said to them by the way, 'See that you have not forgotten something.' The wife said, 'I forgot my coarse comb.' The coach in which they were fell a withered faggot, and he flew away as a hoodie!

"Her two sisters returned, and she followed after him. When he would be on a hill-top, she would follow to try and catch him; and when she would reach the top of a hill, he would be in the hollow on the other side. When night came, and she was tired, she had no place of rest or dwelling. She saw a little house of light far from her, and though far from her, she was not long in reaching it.

"When she reached the house she stood deserted at the door. She saw a little laddie about the house, and she yearned after him exceedingly. The house-wife told her to come in, that she knew her cheer and travel. She lay down, and no sooner did the day come than she rose. She went out, and as she was going from hill to hill, saw a hoodie, whom she followed as on the day before. She came to a second house; saw a second laddie; pursued the hoodie on a third day, and arrived at night at a third house. Here she was told she must not sleep, but be clever and catch the hoodie when he would visit her during night. But she slept; he came where she was, and let fall a ring on her right hand. Now, when she woke, she tried to catch hold of him, and she caught a feather of his wing. He left the feather with her,

and went away. In the morning she did not know what to do till the house-wife told her that he had gone over a hill of poison, over which she could not go without horse shoes on her hands and feet. She gave her man's clothes, and told her to learn smithying till she could make horse shoes for herself.

"This she did, and got over the hill of poison. But on the day of her arrival, she found that her husband was to be married to the daughter of a great gentleman that was in the town. As festivities were in progress, the cook of the house asked the stranger to take his place and make the wedding meal. She watched the bridegroom, and let fall the ring and feather in the broth intended for him. With the first spoon he took up the ring, with the next the feather. He asked for the person who cooked the meal, and said, 'that now was his married wife.' The spells went off him. They turned back over the hill of poison, she throwing the horse shoes behind her to him, as she went a bit forward, and he following her. They went to the three houses where she had been. These were the houses of his three sisters; and they took with them their three sons, and they came home to their own home, and they were happy." *

Such is a good specimen of the folk-tale, and the folk-tales are merely the modern representatives of the old Mythology—merely the detritus, as it were, of the old myths which dealt with the gods and the heroes of the race. In the above tale we are in quite a different world from the practical and scientific views of the 19th century; we have birds speaking and acting as rational beings, and yet exciting no wonder to the human beings they come in contact with; supernatural spells whereby men may be turned into animals; a marriage with a bird, which partially breaks these spells, and the bird becomes a man for part of the day; supernatural kidnapping, ending in the disappearance of the man-bird; and pursuit of him by the wife through fairy regions of charms and spells and untold hardships—a pursuit which ends successfully. It looks all a wild maze of childish nonsense, unworthy of a moment's serious consideration; it would certainly appear to be a hopeless subject for scientific research; for what could science, whose object is truth, have to do with a

* *Abridged from* Campbell's West Highland Tales, vol. 1, p. 63.

tissue of absurdities and falsehoods? But this view is a superficial one, though it is the one commonly held. On looking more deeply into the matter, we shall find that after all there is a method in the madness of Mythology, and that the incongruous mass of tales and broken-down myths that make up a nation's folk-lore is susceptible of scientific treatment. Science first attacks the problem by the method of comparison; it compares the myths and tales of one nation with those of another, with the view of discovering similarities. The outlines, for example, of the tale already given, exist not merely in one or two more tales in our own folk-lore, but can also be traced over all the continent of Europe, as well as in many parts of Asia. The outline of the tale is this—The youngest and best of three daughters is married or given up to some unsightly being or monster, who in reality is a most beautiful youth, but who is under certain spells to remain in a low form of life until some maiden is found to marry him. He then regains his natural form, though, as a rule, only partially; and the newly-married pair have to work out his complete redemption from the spells. But, just as he is about to be free from the spells, the curiosity or disobedience of the wife ruins everything; he disappears, and then follows for the wife the dark period of wandering and toil, which can be brought to an end only by the achievement of tasks, generally three in number, each hopelessly beyond human powers. The husband, who meanwhile has forgotten, owing to the nature of the spells upon him, all about his wife, is on the eve of marrying another, when the last task of all is accomplished by the persevering courage of the wife. The spells then leave him for ever, and happiness reigns in the household ever after.

There are in our Highland folk-lore one or two versions of this same tale. The story of the "Daughter of the Skies," in Mr Campbell's book, is one variation. Here the hoodie crow is replaced by a little doggie, and the wife's disobedience is clearly brought out, while the supernatural machinery—the magical scissors and needle, for example—is much more elaborate. The tale also is found in Norway; in the Norse tale, "East of the Sun and West of the Moon," the hero appears at first as a white *bear, who, on his* marriage with the heroine, becomes a man by

night. She must not, however, see him, for light must not fall on his body or else he at once disappears. But the wife, instigated by her mother, steals a sight of him by lamp-light, with the consequence that he awakes and vanishes. Then follow her trials, pursuit, and recovery of him. The beautiful Greek tale of Psyche and Cupid is but a variation of the same myth. Psyche, the youngest of three royal daughters, incurs the wrath of Venus, who sends Cupid to inspire her with love for something contemptible; as Titania, in Shakespeare, is made to fall in love with the transformed weaver, Bottom. But Cupid, captivated by her beauty, falls in love with her himself, conveys her to a secret cave, and visits her only at night, under strict charge of her not attempting to see him by any light. Her jealous sisters persuade her that she is married to some ugly monster, and she accordingly determines to disobey his injunctions, and inspect him by lamp-light. In so doing, she allows in her admiration of his beauty, a drop of hot oil to fall on his shoulder, and he awakes, and escapes. She suffers woes untold in her pursuit of him, being finally a slave in the household of Venus, who treats her very cruelly. But, of course, she recovers her lost lover at long last. And, again, in India, in the old religious books of the Brahmins, is a somewhat similar tale—the story of Urvasi and Pururavas, the main features of which are the same as the Gaelic and Greek tales already given. To the English reader, the well-known tale of "Beauty and the Beast" will at once occur as an exact parallel to all these. And, if we take the myths where the heroine is the loathly monster, we shall find an equally wide distribution. We have the Hindu tale, where the Princess is disguised as a withered old woman; the Loathly Lady of Teutonic Mythology; and the Celtic story of Diarmad's love for the daughter of the king of the Land under the Waves, who appears first as a hideous monster, and becomes, on approaching Diarmad, the most beautiful woman ever seen.

Thus, then, we have traced the same myth among nations so widely apart as the Celts and Hindus, while, intermediate between these, we found it among the Greeks and Teutons. And some myths are even more widely distributed than that; the tale of the imprisoned maiden and the hero who rescues her from the dragon *or monster* appears among all the nations of Europe as well as

among many of the nations of Asia. Hence, from India in the East, to Ireland in the West, we may find a great mass of mythical tales common to the various nations. And this being the case, it may plainly become a matter of scientific enquiry, first, What the cause of these peculiar myths and tales can be? and, secondly, What the significance is of their wide distribution?

## Cause of Myth.

The cause and origin of these myths have puzzled philosophers of all ages, and it is only a generation ago when the first unravelling of the difficult problem really took place. In olden times their origin was set down to the well-known faculty of invention that man possesses; they were mere inventions and fictions, mostly purposeless, though some were evidently intended for explanations of natural phenomena or of historical events, and others again for the conveyance of moral truth. There were practically two schools of myth-explainers; those who regarded myths as mere allegories or parables, and from them extracted codes of moral obligation and hidden knowledge of the mysteries of nature; and, again, those who, so to speak, "rationalised" the myths—that is to say, those who explained myths as exaggerated real events. Some of these explained, for example, Jupiter as king of Crete in the pre-historic times; and, again, the giant that Jack killed, according to such explanations, was not necessarily far exceeding the natural limit of six or seven feet in height, for the only point to notice was that he was a big burly brute of little sense, overcome by the astuteness of a much lesser man. But this theory gets into grave difficulties when it grapples with the supernatural and the supranatural; in fact, it fails ignominiously. And as to the allegorical theory, while it has no difficulty in explaining Jack the Giant Killer as merely the personification of the truth that power of mind is superior to power of body, that theory is completely wrecked in explaining the myths of Jupiter and the gods generally. No allegory can explain most of these myths, especially the older myths; while the different explanations given by different "allegorizers" of even the simplest myths point to a fundamental error in this theory. Now, it must not be supposed that both allegory and

real events had no share in the formation of myths; they were indeed, most potent factors in the later stages of Mythology, and must have existed all along as a cause for myth. Another theory may be noticed in passing as to the origin of myths in regard to the deities and cosmogony of the world. It may be called the "degradation" theory, and the principle of it is this: As all languages were supposed by theologians to be descendants of the original Hebrew tongue spoken in Eden, so the Mythology of all nations must be more or less a broken-down remembrance of the Hebrew religion and philosophy, first imparted to man in the Garden of Eden. The stoutest supporter of this view is Mr Gladstone. He goes so far as to hold that distinct traces of the Trinity can be found in Greek Mythology, and he consequently resolves Zeus, Apollo, and Athena into the three persons of the Trinity! Supposing for a moment that this theory of the degradation of myth was true, or, indeed, that our only explanation was either or both of the other theories, what a mass of senseless wickedness and immorality much of the deservedly admired Greek Mythology would be? Such theories would argue equal wickedness in the race from whose fancy such inventions sprung: for the Greek Olympus is very full of rapine, paricide, and vice. Yet the Greeks were neither an immoral nor degraded race, but far otherwise. It is this dark side of a nation's Mythology that has puzzled and shocked so many philosophers, and made shipwreck of their theories as to the origin of myths.

With the rise of the science of language and its marked success, all within this century, a complete revolution has taken place, not merely in the case of philology itself, but also in the kindred subjects of Ethnology and Mythology. The methods adopted in linguistic research have also been adopted in the case of Mythology—first, all preconceptions and national prejudices have been put aside; then a careful, even painful examination and comparison of languages have been made, to find laws of interchange of sounds; a consequent discovery of the relationships between languages has taken place; and lastly, a discussion as to the origin of language is thus rendered possible. Exactly the same methods have been employed in the elucidation of myths, with a success that, on the whole, is gratifying. In so

airy and fanciful a subject, results of such strict scientific accuracy cannot be obtained as in the kindred science of language. And a good deal of harm has also been done, even with scientific methods, by pressing some theories of explanation too far. Some Mythologists, for example, are too apt to reduce every myth to a myth about the sun, and hence the evil repute of the "solar myth" theory. But this is merely a good theory injudiciously used; it does not alter the fact of the importance in Mythology of the sun worship.

The theory of the cause of myth that finds most favour at the present time is that which explains myth in connection with, and dependence on, language; while at the same time due regard is had to the other possible sources of it in allegory, analogy, and real, though exaggerated, events. The way in which language gives rise to myth can, however, be understood only after a consideration of the mental powers, state of culture, and consequent interpretation of nature which existed among primitive and myth-making men. Language is but the physical side, as it were, of mythology, and the mental side of it must be considered before the action of language can be appreciated properly. The origin of myth springs from the same cause as the origin of science; they are both man's attempt to interpret his surroundings. Myth is but the badly remembered interpretation of nature given in the youth and inexperience of the world when the feelings were predominant; science is the same interpretation in the old age of the world, given under the influence of the "freezing reason's colder part." Man in the myth-making stage was ignorant of the cause and real character of the mighty natural forces around him—ignorant even of the unaltering uniformity of nature—indeed the only thing the Celts said they were afraid of was that the heavens should fall! The relations of cause and effect they interpreted by their own feelings and will-power; every moving thing, animate or inanimate, was regarded as impelled by a force akin to that which impelled man; that is, by a will-force. Even stationary nature—the everlasting hills and the solid earth—was endowed with feeling, will, and thought. All the mental powers that man found controlling his own actions were unconsciously transferred to nature. A personal life was accordingly attributed to sun, moon, clouds, winds, and the other natural powers; they

were looked upon as performing their special functions by means of faculties of mind and body analogous to those of man or beast. The varying phenomena of the sky, morn and eve, noon and black-clouded night, were the product of the life that dwelt in each. The eclipse of the sun, for example—a most dreaded event in ancient times—was supposed to be caused by a wild beast attempting to swallow the lord of day; and men poured forth, as some savages do yet, with timbrels and drums, to frighten away the monster. The clouds were cows with swelling udders, milked by the sun and wind of heaven—the cattle of the sun under the care of the wind. The thunder was the roar of a mighty beast; the lightning, a serpent darting at its prey. Modern savages are in much this state of culture, and their beliefs have helped greatly in unravelling the problem of mythology. The ideas which children form of outward nature exemplifies in some degree the mythic age through which the race in its childhood passed. "To a little child not only are all living creatures endowed with human intelligence, but everything is alive. In his world, pussy takes rank with 'Pa' and 'Ma' in point of intelligence. He beats the chairs against which he has knocked his head; the fire that burns his finger is 'naughty fire'; and the stars that shine through his bedroom window are eyes like mamma's, or pussy's, only brighter."

It was on these wrong impressions—this anthropomorphic view of nature—that language was founded. Language, in man's passing to a higher state of culture, still kept, stereotyped and fixed, the old personal explanations and statements about nature; the language did not change, but man's views of natural causes and events changed very much as he got more civilised—more free from the influence of his feelings, and more under the sway of his reasoning powers. The knowledge and ideas of earlier men were thus, as it were, fossilised in language, and when the feeling and personification impressed on language had passed into a more intellectual age, the result was misinterpretation and a too literal acceptance of many of the warm and vivid epithets employed of old. The personal explanation of the sun's motion, for instance, and the attributes and epithets given to it, all charged with life and feeling, were in the course of time and language taken in a more literal way, and, since slightly more

scientific views were held as to the real nature of the sun, the old explanations were fastened to a separate sun-god, and thus a divorce was made between the sun and the personality given to it in the old epithets and explanations. The result was that there came to be a sun and a sun-god, Apollo, quite separate; and the life-history given to this sun-god was taken from the explanations formerly given, in personal and anthropomorphic language, of the sun's daily and yearly course, his "rising" and "setting," for example, expressions which, though anthropomorphic, are still in use. A myth cannot, therefore, well arise unless the true meaning of a word or phrase has been forgotten, and a false meaning or explanation fastened on it. We may take an example from Greek mythology to illustrate this. Prometheus, the fire-bringer, is merely the personification of the wooden fire-drill; for the word is derived from the same source as the Sanscrit pramanthas, the "fire machine." Transplanted to Greek soil, the word lost its original signification with the loss of the thing signified, and became a mythological name, for which a new etymology had to be coined. Now, "promethes," in Greek, means "provident," and so Prometheus, the fire-bringer, was transformed into the wise representative of forethought, who stole the fire from heaven for suffering humanity; and a brother was supplied him in the foolish Epimetheus or "afterthought." And thereby hangs one of the most famous and noble myths of antiquity.

Gaelic, in its modern shape even, presents some very startling personifications of natural objects. The regular expression for "The sun is setting" is "Tha a' ghrian 'dol a laidhe"—"going to bed." Mr Campbell, in his very literal and picturesque translation of the West Highland tales, does not hesitate to follow the Gaelic even in its most personal metaphors. "Beul na h-oidhche," "nightfall," is given literally as "the mouth of night." Gaelic poetry, too, is as a rule much more instinct with life and feeling in dealing with natural objects than English poetry. Ossian's address to the setting sun may be quoted to show what a mine of metaphor, and consequent mythology, exists in our poetic and elevated language—

> "An d' fhag thu gorm astar nan speur,
> A mhic gun bheud, a's òr-bhuidh' ciabh?
> Tha dorsan na h-oidhche dhuit reidh,
> Agus phàilliun do chlos san iar.

Thig na stuaidh mu'n cuairt gu mall,
A choimhead fir a's glaine gruaidh,
A' togail fo eagal an ceann
Ri d' fhaicinn cho àillidh 'n ad shuain.
Gabhsa cadal ann ad chòs,
A ghrian, a's till o d' chlos le aoibhneas."

These lines bring us back to the anthropomorphism of the Vedic hymns of India, to which alone, in their richness of personification and mythic power, they can be compared.

Allied to the linguistic theory of myth is also the simpler case of those myths consciously started to explain the names of nations, countries, and places. A common method of accounting for a national name was to invent an ancestor or patriarch who bore that name in an individual form. Britain, so say the myths, is so named from Brutus, grandson of Æneas, the Trojan hero, who first ruled here. Scotland gets its name from Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh. The names of places are dealt with in the same way, and, if the name is anyways significant, the myth takes the lines indicated by the popular etymology of the name. This is the origin of the name of Loch-Ness: "Where Loch-Ness now is there was once a fine glen. A woman went one day to the well to fetch water, and the spring flowed so much that she got frightened, left her pitcher, and ran for her life. Getting to the top of a hill, she turned about and saw the glen filled with water. "Aha!' said she, 'tha loch ann a nis;' and hence the lake was called Loch-Ness." A somewhat similar account is given of the origin and name of Loch-Neagh, in Ireland, and Loch-Awe, in Argyleshire.

From such myths as the last we gradually pass to myths that do not depend in the least on the quibbling and changes of language, but are, consciously or unconsciously, forged explanations of national customs, historical events, or natural phenomena. Thus the custom among the Picts whereby the succession was in the female line, was mythically explained by Bede, thus: The Picts, having invaded Scotland, came to terms with the indigenous Gaels, and, as they brought no women with them, the compact was that, if the Gaels gave them their daughters as wives, the succession would be in the female line. Again, has the reader ever thought why the sea is salt? Well, this is the reason why.

A man once got possession, it is needless to detail how, of a fairy quern which was "good to grind anything," only requiring certain cabalistic words to set it going or to stop it. A ship captain bought it to grind salt for him on his voyage. In mid-ocean the captain gave the quern the necessary order to grind salt, and it did; but unfortunately he forgot the incantation for stopping it. The quern ground on and filled the ship with salt till it sank to the bottom of the sea, where the quern is still grinding salt. And that is the reason why the sea is salt. If any one is sceptical, just let him taste the sea water and he will know its truth!

## Spread of Myth.

Closely akin to the consideration of the cause of myth is the question why myths and tales, evidently of the same origin, exist among nations differing widely both in language and locality. We found that tales of transformed lovers, descending even to similarities in minute details, and hence showing evidences of a common source, existed among all the chief nations of Europe, Western Asia, and India. Besides, other myths of a more general character are found all over the world. Now, what is the cause of this wide distribution of the same myths? Two or three explanations are offered for this, each of which can correctly explain why some particular myths or tales, but none of which can explain why the whole body of mythology and folk-lore, is so widely distributed. Some hold that the stories and myths have been borrowed or transmitted from one nation to another; travellers and translators, they think, will account for nearly the whole of them. While it cannot be denied that many tales have permeated from one nation to another, this will by no means account for the similarities of myths among two nations or more, in whose language and customs these myths are so deeply embedded and ingrooved that we should have to say the language too was borrowed. If a myth, and, to a less degree, a tale, depend on a nation's language—its modes of thought and expression, if the roots of the proper names be embedded in the language, and consequently obscured, that myth and that tale must belong to that nation. They belong to that nation's inheritance as much as its language. Of course, care must be exercised in deciding

what is really the peculiar property of a nation, and distinction made between the various classes into which the materials of mythology and folk-lore fall. "That certain deities occur in India, Greece, and Germany, having the same names and the same character, is a fact that can no longer be denied. That certain heroes, too, known to Indians, Greeks, and Romans, point to one and the same origin for these nations, both by their name and by their history, is a fact by this time admitted by all whose admission is of real value. As heroes are in most cases gods in disguise, there is nothing startling in the fact that nations who had worshipped the same gods should also have preserved some common legends of demigods or heroes, nay, even in a later phase of thought, of fairies and ghosts. The case, however, becomes much more problematical when we ask whether stories also, fables told with a decided moral purpose, formed part of that earliest Aryan inheritance?" Here Max Müller draws a distinct line between fables with a moral or educative purpose and the rest of the materials of mythology, and he has clearly demonstrated that many such are borrowed. The fables of Æsop have been adopted into every language in Europe, and the moral tales of the Indians, after many vicissitudes, found a "local habitation" in the pages of La Fontaine and others. Another explanation for the distribution of myths is that primitive men worked in similar grooves wherever they lived; man's circumstances being the same, his ideas and the expression of them will present strong resemblances everywhere. This view will account for the myths that are most widely distributed over the earth's surface. Jack the Giant-Killer, for instance, appears in the Zulu story of Uhlakanyana, who cheats the cannibal giant and his mother, to the latter of whom he had been delivered to be boiled, and whom he cunningly succeeds in substituting for himself. But the theory can apply only in a general way; to the great body of myths common to certain nations it cannot apply at all; it does not touch their deep and often detailed resemblances. What harmonises best with the facts of mythologic distribution is the grouping of nations into families proved to be genealogically allied from possessing a common body of myths and tales that must be descended from a parent stock. Although the facts of comparative mythology are sufficiently strong of

themselves to prove the common origin of the nations from India to Ireland, yet it is satisfactory that the science of language has already proved the common descent of these nations, as far at least as language is concerned. Linguists have called the parent nation, from which they have sprung, the Aryan nation, a name which shall be adopted in this discussion. The only other group of nations that can satisfactorily be shown by their language and mythology to possess a common descent is the Semitic, which includes the Hebrews, Chaldeans, and Arabians. The Aryan and Semitic races have nothing in common, except what is borrowed, either in the matter of language or myth. When we are told that the Celtic god Bel is the same as the Semitic Baal, we may conclude that the assertion is, more than likely, both unscientific and untrue.

## The Aryan Nation.

From the comparison of roots in the various present and past descendants of the original Aryan tongue, and, in a less degree, from a comparison of their myths, we are enabled to form a fair idea of the culture and religion of the Aryans. Not only can radical elements expressing such objects and relations as father, mother, brother, daughter, husband, brother-in-law, cow, dog, horse, cattle, ox, corn, mill, earth, sky, water, star, and hundreds more, be found identically the same, in the various branches of the Aryan tongue, now or sometime spoken, but they can also be proved to possess the elements of a mythological phraseology clearly descended from a common source. In the matter of culture, the Aryans were organised in communities framed on the model of the patriarchal household. They had adopted a system of regular marriage with an elaborate grading of kinships and marriage affinities. In the household the father was king and priest, for there was also a family religion; the wife and the rest of the family, though subservient to the *patria potestas*, were far from being slaves; while, outside the household, grades and ranks of nobility or kinship were strictly marked. Comfortable houses and clustered villages, clearings and stations, with paths and roads, were in existence; the precious metals, together with copper, tin, and bronze, were in use, but iron was probably unknown. The domestic animals had long been tamed and named,

for cattle and flocks composed their chief wealth, though the plough tilled the field and corn was grown and crushed in the mills and querns. They could count to one hundred at the very least, for the root of *cend*, "*hund*-red," is common to all the descendant tongues, and they had divided the year into seasons and months—a fact which is especially proved by the root for *month* being taken from the name given to the moon, "the measurer." They spoke a language that was highly inflected and complex; that is to say, the relation between words and the relations of time (or tense) and mood were expressed by changes in the terminations of words. On the whole, the Aryans were high in the barbaric state of culture, as opposed, on the one hand to the savage, and, on the other, to the civilised state of progress.

In regard to religion and Mythology, the Aryans were in much the same stage of advancement as in their culture generally. As their culture and language had required long ages to reach up to the state of comparative excellence at which they had arrived, so, too, their religion must have passed through lower phases until it reached the well-developed cosmos of Aryan times. And as there are not wanting many signs of those earlier stages of belief both in Aryan Mythology and in the Mythologies of the descendant nations, it is necessary to glance briefly at what these stages may have been. Belief in the supernatural exists, and has existed, in all races of men whose beliefs we have any knowledge of. The lowest phase of this belief is known as "Animism," and consists in believing that what is presented to us in our dreams and visions has a real existence. Savage man makes no distinction between his dreaming and waking existence. He sees the "shadows" of the dead in his sleep, and firmly believes in their objective reality. But not merely the dead alone have shadows or spirits; the living, too, have spirits or duplicates of self. Animals, also, and material objects, have souls, for is not the dead hero seen in dreams wearing the ghosts of arms—sword and hatchet, and such like—that he possessed in life? The worship of ancestors would appear to have been the first form in which these beliefs took the shape of an active religion or worship of higher beings. Ancestor worship, though first, is by no means lost in subsequent stages, for of all forms it is the most persistent in its survival. Modern China and ancient Rome are prominent

proofs of this fact. From ancestors, it is an easy step to worship the ghosts of other persons; sometimes these were looked on as beneficent, and at other times as maleficent, beings, whose help was to be invoked or whose wrath was to be deprecated. Ghosts, ancestral and other, might inhabit natural objects—trees, rivers, wells, and animals; and this, combined with the worship of the actual ghosts of these objects, sometimes gave rise to "fetishism," so well called the worship of "stocks and stones." Totemism, again, consists in the worship of a tribal badge; some clan or nation worship a particular object, generally an animal, a form of worship which may easily have sprung from ancestor worship, since the ancestral ghost may have taken that particular form. Some go so far as to assert that the names of some of the Highland and Irish clans and their badges are remnants or remembrances of this worship, and appeal in proof is especially made to the clan "Chattan," with its animal crest, the cat. The next stage is the worship of the nature-spirits, or the natural powers as seen in objects of outward nature—clouds, lightning, and sky. This gives rise to polytheism proper, and, perhaps, prior to that, to henotheism, as Max Müller has so well named that "totemic" worship of one especial element of nature, making it for the moment the supreme deity with all the attributes that are applicable to it embellished and exhausted. In polytheism the plurality of deities is expressed; in henotheism it is implied. Polytheism generally presents a dynastic system of gods under the rule of one supreme king or father, while henotheism implies a co-ordination of deities. "These deities," says Mr Sayce, "are necessarily suggested by nature; the variety of nature overpowers in an infantile state of society the unity for which the mind of man is ever yearning. Gradually, however, the attributes applied to the objects and powers of nature take the place of the latter; the sun becomes Apollo, the storm Ares. Deities are multiplied with the multiplication of the epithets which the mythoporic age changes into divinities and demi-gods, and side by side with a developed Mythology goes a developed pantheon. The polytheism, which the infinite variety of nature made inevitable, continues long after the nature-worship that underlay it has grown faint and forgotten. A time at last comes when even abstract names have to submit to the common process; temples

are raised to Terror and Fear, to Love and Reverence; and the doom of the old polytheism of nature is at hand. When once the spirit of divinity has been breathed into abstractions of the human mind, it cannot be long before their essential unity is recognised, and they are all summed up under the one higher abstraction of monotheism."

But this quotation anticipates the history of Aryan Mythology in the descendant nations. Aryan religion itself was a fully developed henotheism, or rather a polytheism, where the Supreme Deity was different at different times in the eyes of the same worshipper. At one time, to take the Vedic hymns as representative of the oldest and nearest stratum of religious thought to the Aryan religion, Indra is the only god whom the singer recognises, and he exhausts his religious vocabulary on his praise alone; and at another time Varuna receives all worship, at another it is Agni. Indra represents the heaven-god, more especially in the view of a rain-giving deity, for the root is the same as the English *water*, and is seen also in the sacred River Indus. Agni is the god of fire; Varuna, of the canopy of heaven—the Greek Uranus. Comparing and analysing the elements of Teutonic, Greek, and Hindu Mythology, for example, we may arrive at a tolerably clear conception of the Aryan pantheon and religious cultus. It would seem the chief deity was connected with the worship of light; the shining canopy of heaven was the head of the Aryan Olympus. The Gaelic word *dia* (and *diu* day); Sanscrit, *Dyaus;* Greek, *Zeus;* Latin, *deus* and *Ju*-piter; and English, *Tiw* (as seen in *Tues*day), are from the primitive name of this god, their common root being *div*, shining. Hence *dia* originally meant the bright sky, and Jupiter, the "sky-father," is the Roman version of "Father in Heaven." Fire, in all its manifestations, was an especial object of worship; Agni is the Vedic name of this diety, which appears in Latin *ignis*, and Gaelic *ain* (heat), but the Gaelic equivalent deity would appear to have been the "Dagda," or the Great Good Fire. The sun and moon were prominent among the deities, the sun being the most in favour, perhaps, of all the gods. The epithets applied to him are innumerable, and, as a consequence, scarcely two nations have the same name for the sun-god, and nearly all have one or two deities that are phases of solar worship. The Sanscrit, *surya;*

Latin, *sol;* Greek, *helios;* English, *sun;* and Gaelic, *solus,* present the chief root, the first four actually meaning the "sun," and being used as the name of the sun-deity often.

And there were other gods hardly inferior to these gods; such were what we may call the "meteorological" deities—the regulators of weather and seasons. Prominent among these was the thunder god, who brings thunder and rain; in the Vedic hymns his place is filled by the chief god Indra; in Latin he is the Jupiter Tonans; in the Norse Mythology, he appears as Thor who is next in importance to Odin himself; and in the Celtic Mythology, he is known as Taranis. The storm god was worshipped under the title of Maruts, the Latin Mars, and Greek Ares. The wind, Vata, the Gaelic *gaoth,* had a high position among the deities, but among the descendant nations its position is not quite so high, unless we connect with it the god Hermes, who in Greek Mythology is clearly a wind god both in his connection with music and as messenger to the gods.

The gods we have hitherto discussed belong to the *intangible* objects of nature—the sky, stars, sun, dawn, and, perhaps, so too the "weather" gods. Max Müller gives two other possible classes of deified objects: *semi-tangible* objects such as trees, mountains, the sea, the earth. These objects supply the material for what he calls the semi-deities. And thirdly, lowest of all, are *tangible* objects, such as "stocks and stones" and other elements of fetishism. The worship of semi-tangible objects shows clearly a remnant of the old animism, for these objects are endowed in savage culture with spirits of a personal type. "The lowest races," says Mr Tylor, "not only talk of such nature-spirits, but deal with them in a thoroughly personal way, which shows how they are modelled on human souls. Modern travellers have seen North Americans paddling their canoes past a dangerous place on the river, and throwing in a bit of tobacco with a prayer to the river-spirit to let them pass. An African wood cutter who has made the first cut at a great tree has been known to take the precaution of pouring some palm-oil on the ground, that the angry tree-spirit coming out may stop to lick it up, while the man runs for his life. The state of mind to which these nature-spirits belong must have been almost as clearly remembered by the Greeks, when they could still fancy the nymphs of the lovely

groves and springs and grassy meadows coming up to the council of the Olympian gods, or the dryads growing with the leafy pines and oaks, and uttering screams of pain when the woodman's axe strikes the trunk." These nature spirits play a most important part in folk-lore, appearing in the tales of the river demon, the water kelpie, who drowns his victim in the whirlpool; and in the giants, trolls, and dwarfs, who represent mountain and earth spirits; the healing waters of sacred wells have only adopted saints' names in place of the old pagan deity; while the little elves and fairies of the woods are but dim recollections of the old forest spirits.

Of magic, a word or two may be said. It must be remembered that the gods could change their shape at pleasure; their normal shape among Aryan nations was the human, but they could assume the shape of particular men or beasts, or even of inanimate objects, for Jupiter came into Danae's prison in a shower of gold. Perseus' magical hat of darkness and shoes of swiftness belong to the same cloud-changing character. Spells and enchantments form an important feature of magical powers, and have their origin in spirit-explanations of the numbing power of frost, the relaxing power of heat, the power of drugs, as of the Indian Soma, and doubtless in the magnetic influence exerted by some men and animals, notably the serpent. And if we descend still lower, we find magic as a rule depend on a false use of analogies. The Zulu who has to buy cattle may be seen chewing a bit of wood, in order to soften the breast of the seller he is dealing with, for as the wood gets softer in his mouth, the seller's heart is supposed also to soften. Such superstitions exist even in our own country to the present day. The writer of this has known of a case where a clay body "corpan creadha," was actually made and stuck over with nails and pins, and placed in a stream channel to waste away. As the clay wasted, so with sharp pangs would waste away the person for whom it was intended.

The ethical side of the Aryan religion presented some interesting features. The contest between the powers of light and darkness—Dyaus and Indra on one side against Ahriman or Vritra, the bright sun-god against the snake-god of darkness, Apollo strangling the Python, represents a real ethical idea—

good overcoming evil. Sacrifice and prayer, temple and altar, were known; and sin and sin-offering were familiar ideas to the Aryans. A shadowy spirit existence after death was believed in; heroes were taken to the halls of the gods, but the kingdom of Hades was the general abode of spirits, where the good and the evil got their deserts.

## Aryan Myths.

We shall now see how the Aryans dealt in one or two cases with the actions of their gods, and how this gave rise to a mythical life history of them in later times. It was around the sun-god that most of these myths were gathering. Off-spring of night, whom he slays, he loves the dawn maiden, Daphne—"rosy-fingered morn," who flies from his embrace over the azure plains of Heaven, but, Cinderella-like, leaves a golden streak of light behind her whereby she may be followed and found. The sun has his toils, too, in the pursuit; storm-clouds intercept his path; at times even the eclipse monster swallows him; and he has to toil for mean creatures like men to give them light and heat, owing to the spells put upon him. But at length he overtakes, in the evening, his morning love, the dawn, now the evening dawn, who consoles him as he descends beneath the wave. In some such strains must the old Aryans have spoken of the sun's career and actions, and sung the praises of the Being who guided his flying coursers over the plains of Heaven. Later ages rationalised the myth into the loves and actions of Apollo and Daphne, Hercules and Dejanira, and others innumerable. The myth is broken down to a folk-tale, which appears in a variety of modern forms, of which the fairy tale of Cinderella is the best example. Cinderella is the youngest, as usual, of three sisters—the night-watches; she is in fact the dawn maiden; she is pursued by the young prince, and leaves her glass slipper—her streak of light—behind her, by means of which she is identified at last. This tale appears also in the Gaelic popular stories. A king's daughter has to fly with her fairy treasures—the peculiar thing is that these maidens have always treasures, and there generally is as much dispute about them as about the maidens themselves; these treasures appear to be connected with the rain clouds, the cows and cattle of the sun. The king's daughter takes service in the

new land she arrives in; goes to a ball, unknown to her employers, in her fairy dress; creates a sensation, so to speak; but having to leave in haste, she loses her glass slipper, whereby the enamoured prince is enabled to find her. The tale of the "Hoodie Crow," with which our discussion commenced, would appear to be a broken down myth of the solar class; and it is accordingly connected with the nocturnal life of the sun-god, who then is under the spell of the dark powers. The dawn maiden pursues him through toils and difficulties, and at last frees him from the spells.

Another fruitful source of myth and worship is the change of summer into winter, when the earth has to pass from the genial rule of the "fire" powers to that of the "frost" king. The earth is spell-bound during winter, by the machinations of the frost-king; the lovely goddess of summer has been carried away, leaving her mother Earth disconsolate; "Proserpina gathering flowers, herself a fairer flower, by gloomy Dis is gathered." She becomes the wife of Pluto, god of the lower world, but is allowed to return to her mother for half of the year. Connected with this myth is the widespread tale of the imprisoned maiden. There are always three characters in the myth; the monster or giant, who performs the abduction; the maiden who is rich in treasures as well as beautiful; and the youthful hero, the young Apollo, who is destined to overcome the monster and his spells.

Some minor points may briefly be noticed. Among the many names of the sun in the Veda, he is called the "golden-handed," a very natural simile for the golden rays shooting finger-like from him. The Hindus accordingly rationalise this, and tell how Savitri cut off his hand in a strait, and that the priests made a golden hand for him. The Norse god Tys (Zeus) had also his hand bitten off by the Fenris-wolf, and the Irish king of the De Dannans, Nuada of the Silver Hand, lost his hand in fight with the Firbolg giant, and the physician Diancet made him a silver one. Another wide-spread myth is to be referred to the same source; the sun-god Apollo is the best of archers—the "Far-darter," of Homeric poetry. In nearly every Aryan nation there is a historical legend telling the doughty deed of some great archer; such is the story of Tell, in Switzerland, which is typical of the rest. The legend appears in the German tale of Eigel,

brother of Wayland, the smith-god; while in Braemar it is circumstantially told regarding the ancestor of the Machardies, also a "smith" family. Of myths arising from the wind, storm, thunder, earth, and sea, it is unnecessary to speak as yet; they will appear in their proper place among the folk-tales, and some—as the sea-deities, Lir and his children—among the myths of the heroes.

### Results of the General Principles.

The peculiar characteristics of Mythology have now been indicated; the cause of myth, and the wide diffusion of the same myths among different nations have been discovered respectively in the philosophy of primitive man, and the common descent of the chief European and Asiatic nations. It has been shown that the Aryan nation possessed what may be dignified with the name of a civilisation; its culture and religion were of a very high type, though there were not wanting numerous traces of the culture of more primitive and ruder times. It now becomes our duty to follow the fortunes of the Mythology of one of the nations descended from this Aryan parent nation, and see how it shaped the common heritage.

It may be set down as a general principle that the Celts ought not to have in their language, mythology, or customs, any features inconsistent with their Aryan descent; they may have developed the outward and inward features of Aryan civilisation, according to the idiosyncracies of the Celtic race, but the essential Aryan characteristics ought still to be recognisable in the descendant Celtic languages and myths. Whatever we find in these must conform, regard being had to the development of Celtic peculiarities, to what we know to have been true of the myths and language of the parent Aryan tongue, or of those of one or two of the other Aryan nations. Anything in Celtic myth, language, or customs, inconsistent with an Aryan descent, or of a plainly non-Aryan character, must first of all be distrusted until its existence among the Celts, and them alone, has been established on indubitable grounds. Nor must explanations of Celtic phenomena be accepted which would imply relationship with races outside the Aryan stock—such as with the Semitic or Hebrew race, until clear historical or other proof is adduced. The *a priori* argument against such a connection is so strong that

special care must be exercised in allowing non-Aryan explanations to appear. It is needless to remark that until lately the Celts suffered much from the injudicious and unscientific theories of Celtic enthusiasts, and it has been only by the patient industry of the Germans that full recognition has been given to the proper position of the Celts among the other Indo-European nations. Even yet, in Scotland, too little attention is paid to the scientific facts established in Celtic ethnology and philology. For this state of matters there is now little excuse, more especially as within the last year or two the results of Continental and British learning have been put before the public in the works of Mr Elton and Professor Rhys, to both of whom the present writer must express his great obligations.

## Sources of Information.

Of the old Celtic nations—their culture and their religion—we have no native account. No Celtic language has got any literary remains earlier than the seventh century at farthest, and even these are but glosses or marginal Gaelic equivalents of Latin words in manuscripts. The oldest manuscripts of connected works cannot be traced farther back than the eleventh century. By this period Christianity had asserted its sway, at least in name, and the old paganism remained only in the customs and the heroic and folk tales of the nation. What religion existed in Ireland and Britain a thousand years before this period of the oldest manuscripts must be discovered, if it can at all, from some other source than contemporary native evidence. Yet we are not without a fair idea of what the old Celtic religion was. The sources of our information in deciphering what Professor Rhys has called "the weather worn history" of the Celts are these: Roman and Greek writers have left contemporary accounts of Celtic history, religion, and customs, though in the case of religion and customs, such accounts are scrappy indeed, and the history is generally a statement of contemporary actions and the relations of the Celts to the favoured races of Rome and Greece. Next to these come the monuments and inscriptions of ancient Gaul and Britain. These comprise mostly the votive inscriptions to the deities, the statues, and the coinage of the period. The names of places, especially of rivers,

have indicated Celtic localities, migrations, and religious beliefs; for how numerous are, for instance, the rivers with the name Dee (goddess), showing the wide-spread worship of water and rivers among the Celts? Examination also of the rude stone monuments and the barrows of pre-historic times has elucidated much that is dark in Celtic history, while the examination of physical characteristics in the race has helped even more to clear up difficulties of ethnology. A judicious use of the oldest heroic and folk tales must divulge some secrets in regard to Mythology, if not to History; while modern folk-tales and customs lend special aid in reflecting light on the past. An intelligent scrutiny of the Roman calendar of saints will disclose a few more Celtic divinities in the realms of saintdom; for where the Church did not make demons or heroes of the ancient gods, it did the next best thing—it made saints of them. In the same way we can recognise Pagan festivals and customs in a Christian guise; the Church festivals are nearly all the result of assimilating the existing religious customs. And, lastly, to steady our whole results, we have to remember that the Celts are an Aryan people, and that explanations of their customs and religions must follow the ordinary lines of the other Aryan nations. Where there are differences—and there are many such—these must be caused by the fact that the Celts assimilated with themselves an earlier population. Notice has already been taken of the Pictish law of succession, where descent is traced through the mother. This implies clearly a low view of the state of matrimony, and one clearly opposed to an Aryan source. We are therefore fairly justified in regarding the Picts as strongly admixed with a non-Aryan race.

In thus reconstructing the past history of the Celts, at least three classes of *savants* are pressed into our service. First and foremost is the philologist, who has within the last generation or two completely revolutionised the science of ethnology. He has shown in the clearest manner possible the common descent of most of the European nations, at least as far as language is concerned, and that means a vast amount, for language is followed by a common mythology, and, in a less degree, by common customs. The next savant we draw upon is the anthropologist, or, rather, the physiologist; he examines the remains of ancient man

and the characteristics of modern man, and classifies accordingly. And, thirdly, we have the archæologist, who examines prehistoric remains and implements. These three classes of workers do not well agree; Professor Huxley despises the ethnological results of linguistic science, while Professor Rhys does not conceal his contempt for those who decide on national descent by "skin and skull;" and Mr Ferguson will not leave his "rude stone monuments" to consider what either of them may say. Two such men as Mr Tylor and Mr Elton are, therefore, to the ordinary student, simply invaluable guides, from the fact that they attempt to combine the researches of all three. From the materials collected from these three sources, we shall proceed to give a short account of the Celts and their religion.

## The Celts.

When or where the people lived who spoke the original Aryan tongue is not known with any certainty. "It seems probable," says one writer, "that their home was somewhere in South-western Asia, and the time of their dispersion not less than three thousand years before Christ." Fick holds that they split up first into two parts, answering to the modern Asiatic and European Aryans. The European branch again broke up into two—the South-western European division and the Northern European division. The latter included the Slavonic (Russians and old Prussians), and the Teutonic (English, Germans, Norse, &c.) races; while the Southern branch comprised the Greek, Latin, and Celtic races. The order in which they are enumerated above shows the order of their arrival in Europe; first came the Celts leading the van of the Southern division, while the Sclavs brought up the rear of all. It has been remarked that for the purpose of attaining political greatness the Celts came too soon, the Sclavs too late. The line of Celtic migration across Europe has been traced in the names of places, especially the river names. The Don and the Dnieper would appear to prove that they crossed the Russian steppes. Yet there are evident traces of the Celts on the Ægean sea, which itself may be from the root of the Gaelic *aigean;* and we have the River Strumon on the Thracian coast, which is clearly Celtic from the existence of the *s*, which was lost in Greek itself; and we may add the famous

Mount Pindus—the black mount (?), in Greece. In any case, however, be their route whatever we please, we find the Celts in the earliest records we have of them in possession of the greatest portion of Western Europe. At the time of their taking Rome in 390 B.C., the Celts would appear to have possessed, as they certainly did two centuries later, Northern Italy, France, Belgium, and part of Germany, most of Spain, Britain, and Ireland. How much of the middle of Europe they then held is unknown, but that they did possess part of what now is Germany is clear from the names of places, and also from the fact that the Germans have, in common with the Celts, many myths which must have then been absorbed by the Germans in absorbing the Celtic population. About 220 B.C. the Romans conquered Northern Italy, a hundred years later they conquered the Mediterranean coast of France, and seventy years afterwards Cæsar conquered the whole of France and completely crushed the Gallic power.

That is briefly the political side of their history. But there are two points to notice in their internal history of special importance in the present inquiry. The Celts, in entering Europe, found the country inhabited, and this previous population, a non-Aryan one of course, they either exterminated or absorbed. It is, therefore, of vital importance to know as much as possible about this previous population, for, naturally, its customs, beliefs, and, in a much less degree, its language, were absorbed by the conquering Celt. From the evidence of language and customs alone, Professor Rhys has, in his work on "Celtic Britain," been able to prove the existence of a previous non-Celtic and non-Aryan population in Britain. The Pictish custom of succession already mentioned, and the continual reference in classical writers to some British nations who had community of wives—Cæsar erroneously attributes this to all Britain alike, Celt and non-Celt—point to a low idea of matrimony that must have belonged to the previous population. Again, in the list of Kings given for the Picts, the names are not of an Aryan or Celtic type; Aryan names were always compounds, however much denuded by time, but these Pictish names are monosyllabic and unmeaning. The frequency of animal names in Pictish districts has also been adduced as a proof in the same direction, though not a convincing argument, for most nations have animal names among their per-

sonal names. Mr Elton has pointed out some peculiar legal customs with regard to the right of the youngest son to succeed to the father's property, and these, he thinks, indicate a non-Aryan source. But the matter is rendered practically a certainty, if we summon to our aid the physiologist. He finds the British nation divided into two or more races. These are, at the least, the small dark-skinned race and the fair-skinned race. "All the Celts," says Mr Elton, "according to a remarkable consensus of authorities, were tall, pale, and light-haired." The dark-skinned race evidently belong to a different race from the Celts, and when we consider that Europe has been inhabited for several thousand years, and that men have existed here who used stone weapons, and thereafter bronze, before iron came into vogue, which it probably did along with the Celts, we must believe that there was a race before the Celts in Europe, who used stone and bronze weapons. But the evidence does not stop here. From the contents of the barrows and tombs of the stone and bronze ages, it has been proved by the skeletons and skulls that there were two races at least previous to the Celts; one race being the dark-skinned and small one already mentioned, with long skulls; the other with fair skin and hair and broad skulls, a tall race, rough-featured, beetle-browed, with the nose overhung at its root, heavy cheek-bones, and prominent chin; these last differing much from the straight-faced, oval-headed men who are recognised as Celts and Aryans. The dark-skinned race of Britain is called the "Silurian," from the ancient tribe so named by Tacitus in the Vale of the Severn, and described by him as "Iberian" in appearance. The fair race Mr Elton designates the "Finnish," from its apparent Finnish or Ugrian affinities. The Picts would appear to be for the most part of this race, doubtless, with a strong admixture in after times of the pure Celtic stock. The archæologist, unfortunately, cannot help us much, but it is believed that this Finnish race were the builders of the huge stone monuments scattered all over Europe—dolmens, cromlechs, and Druid circles, while the barrows of both the ante-Celtic races exist.

The influence exerted by these previous races on Celtic customs and religion must doubtless have been considerable. "The strangeness of the 'lower mythology' prevailing in Wales and Britanny might afford some evidence in favour of its pre-

Celtic origin. But no country in Europe is free from those gross superstitions which seem to indicate an underworld of barbarism and remnants of forgotten nations not wholly permeated by the culture of the dominant races." Professor Rhys goes so far as to refer Druidism to the Silurian race, because Cæsar mentions Britain as the birthplace of that cultus, and it is of a character which he considers non-Aryan. It is almost certain that second-sight and other ecstatic moods must be referred to the pre-Celtic races.

### Welsh and Gaels.

The second point in the internal history of the Celts is the fact that the race is divided into two great divisions, caused by the languages used by each. The difference between Welsh and Gaelic is very great, yet not so great as to preclude their being classed as one race, making up one of the Aryan branches. The difference between the two languages can be traced as far back as history goes, and, by monuments and inscriptions can be followed back for two thousand years, when still the Gaelic race was very different in language from the Welsh or British. It would appear that the Celts overran Europe in two successive waves of conquest. The first wave was the Gaelic one; it was followed by the Welsh—we may rather call it the Gaulish wave. The Gauls push the Gaels from France into Britain and Ireland, and then followed them into Britain. When British history begins with the Christian era, France and Belgium were Gaulish or Welsh-speaking, and so also was the Eastern part of England, and the Scotch Lowlands; while Cornwall and Devon, most of Wales, Cumberland, Galloway, and the surrounding counties, north of the Forth, and all Ireland belonged to the Gaels. It must be remembered that a good portion of the population north of the Grampians were probably non-Celtic. By the end of the seventh century of this era no Gael lived in England; the British tribes had been driven back to the corners of the country by the Saxons, and they absorbed the old Gaelic population. Ireland was still altogether Celtic, and so remained practically till the 13th century and later.

The last wave of the Celts was in its turn pressed on from two sides. First the Romans overran and garrisoned Gaul, and then England, which they kept for four hundred years, much as

we keep India at present. Then the Teutonic nations pressed on France from the north, conquered it and were absorbed; while in England they conquered and absorbed the old population, leaving the old Welsh population to the western shores. The eastern portion of Ireland was conquered and settled in, and the rest has been gradually falling under the sway of the English tongue. The Celtic speaking peoples at present are the Bretons of Britanny, the Welsh, the Irish, and the Highlanders. The total number who can understand a Celtic tongue is, according to M. Sebillot, three millions and a-half *(Rev. Celt., iv., 278)*.

## CELTIC CHARACTERISTICS.

Of the physical characteristics of the Celts, except to show unity or diversity of descent, it would be needless to speak in discussing their Mythology; but there are so many Irish legends bearing upon the early ethnology of these islands, with continual reference to small dark men, tall brown-haired and fair-haired races, that it is necessary to at least glance at the question. The unanimity of ancient opinion in making the Celts tall and fair-haired has already been noticed, and in the myths the ideal of beauty is, as a rule, what is told of the summer isles of the West, where dwelt a divine race of the pure Celtic type, "long-faced, yellow-haired hunters" and goddesses with hair like gold or the flower of the broom. Another type of beauty was recognised: Peredur or Percival of Wales, as well as the lady Deirdre of Irish story, would have no consort unless the hair was black as the raven's wing, the skin as white as snow, and the two red spots in the cheeks as red as the blood of the bird which the raven was eating in the snow. But, "if you look at the Celtic countries," says the author of "Loch-Etive and the Sons of Uisnach," "that is, countries in which Celtic was spoken in old time, or is spoken now, you find a predominance of dark hair." There would seem, therefore, to have been a decided change in the colour of the hair among the Celts since the times of Cæsar and Tacitus; but whether this is due to mingling of races or is connected with a higher nervous activity, for fair-haired children become dark-haired as the nervous system becomes more active by years, is a question which, though important for the mythologist to know in its bearing on the migration and borrowing of myths and

manners, yet cannot be decided in the present state of knowledge. We have still among us the remnants of the small dark people, and, if Professor Rhys is right, the Highlands must mostly in race be of the fair Finnish type that anteceded the Celts, with just sufficient of the Celtic conqueror among them as to take his language and general manners.

There is, however, a more wonderful agreement in the mental characteristics formerly attributed to the Celts with what we now regard as the Celtic character. Roman writers have noticed their wonderful quickness of apprehension, their impressibility and great craving for knowledge, qualities which have rendered the Celt a very assimilable being in the fusion of races. They were generous to a degree; prompt in action, but not very capable of sustained effort. Cæsar is never tired speaking of the "mobilitas" —changeableness—of the Gauls, and also of their "celerity," both mental and physical. Another feature noticed from the very first, and still noticeable in the Celts, is their fondness for colour; "loudness," we might say, both in colour and sound, musical or other, has been especially attractive to them. They appear in flaming tartan dresses before the walls of Rome in 390 B.C., as we see from both Livy and Virgil. "They wear," says Diodorus Siculus, a writer of the 1st century, "bracelets and armlets, and round their necks thick rings, all of gold, and costly finger rings, and even golden corselets; they have dyed tunics, flowered with colours of every kind, and striped cloaks fastened with a brooch, and divided into numerous many-coloured squares." In this description we have the tartan, but unfortunately the kilt had not yet made its appearance; the Gauls and ancient Britons actually wore tartan trousers! Their love of ornament and colour appears strongly in the mythic tales equally of Wales, Ireland, and the Highlands; indeed, so rich is the description in one Welsh tale that at the end of it we are told that "no one knows the 'Dream of Rhonabwy' without a book, neither bard nor gifted seer; because of the various colours that were on the horses, and the many wondrous colours of the arms, and of the panoply and of the precious scarfs, and of the virtue-bearing stones."

We can trace among the Celts the same succession of political life that we find in some of the other Aryan nations, notably

the Greeks and the Romans. The patriarchal system of Aryan times had given place on European soil to kings, who were merely larger editions of the patriarch of old. They were kings of the Homeric type; for the Irish kings are not accurately represented in the lives of the saints as Pharaohs surrounded with Druids and magicians. The king consulted the chiefs beneath him, and the people, after this consultation, were told of his pleasure, but could only, apparently, murmur approval or disapproval. In the course of time, the chiefs abolished the kingly power, and conducted matters themselves as an oligarchy, often cruelly oppressing the common people. In Greece, the oligarchy was overthrown by some clever man who sided with the common people and, through them, made himself "tyrant," as they called it. The last step was the abolition of tyranny and the setting up of a democracy. Rome shows much the same historical sequence, only the tyrant does not appear; the oligarchy extended some privileges to the commons, and a sort of union was established, which, however, in the end, failed, and gave place to an Imperial sway. Among the Gauls we have distinct traces of all these phenomena, "though," as Professor Rhys says, "no Gaulish Herodotus or Livy was found to commit them to the pages of history." Gaul would appear to have just passed through the stage when tyrants and oligarchs were struggling with the people; for Cæsar found everywhere "the sulking and plotting representatives of the fallen dynasties, and readily turned them into use, either in bringing information about what was going on in the senates of the peoples who had expelled their ancestors from the office of king, or in keeping their states in subjection by appointing them kings in the room of their fathers and under Roman protection." No wonder then that Cæsar tells us that Gaul was torn asunder by factions. Britain had yet retained its kings, and appears to have lost them only when the Island was conquered by the Romans. Ireland had its five kings even within historic times; and the history of Scotland during the Stuart period shows how nearly an oligarchy came to rule this country.

The old Celtic population of both Gaul and Britain appears to have been very prosperous. They were excellent farmers, but their chief riches lay in their cattle; and their food, especially in Britain, was mostly flesh, milk, and cheese. Posidonius, in the

first century before Christ, has left us a description of a Gaulish banquet which is important as reflecting light on the myths and tales of later Irish times. He was delighted at the antique simplicity of his entertainers, and amused at their Gallic frivolity and readiness for fighting at meal times. "They were just like the people in Homer's time." The guest was not asked his name or the purpose of his journey until the feast was over. They sat on a carpet of rushes or on the skins of animals in front of little tables. There was plenty of meat, roast and boiled, which they ate, after the fashion of lions, gnawing the joint, but they would at times use their small bronze knives, kept in a separate sheath by the side of the sword. Beer was their drink, which they poured through their long moustaches like water through a sieve or funnel. "The minstrels sang and the harpers played, and, as the company drank, they bowed to the right in honour of their god. The guests sat in three rings—nobles, shield-bearers, and javelin-men—all in order of their precedence." If they quarrelled about the food, they would get up and fight it to the death; and sometimes the guests were entertained with swordplay, and sometimes even a man would consent to die to amuse the rest, so careless were they of life. Their conduct and appearance in battle and in the chase is no less important for us to notice. "We seem," says Mr Elton, "to see the Brigantian soldier, with his brightly-painted shield, his pair of javelins and his sword hilt 'as white as the whale's-bone': his matted hair supplied the want of a helmet, and a leather jerkin served as a cuirass. When the line of battle was formed, the champions ran out to insult and provoke the foe; the chiefs rode up and down on their white chargers shining in golden breastplates, others drove the war chariots along the front, with soldiers leaning out before their captain to cast their spears and handstones: the ground shook with the prancing of horses, and the noise of the chariot wheels. We are recalled to scenes of old Irish life which so strangely reproduce the world of the Greek heroes and the war upon the plains of Troy." We see the hunters following the cry of the hounds through the green plains and sloping glens; the ladies at the feast in the woods, the game roasting on the hazel-spits, 'fish and flesh of boar and badger,' and the great bronze cauldrons at the fireplace in the cave. The

hero, Cuchulain, passes in his chariot brandishing the heads of the slain; he speaks with his horses, the Gray and 'Dewy-Red,' like Achilles on the banks of Scamander. The horses, in Homeric fashion, weep tears of blood and fight by their master's side; his sword shines redly in his hand, the 'light of valour' hovers round him, and a goddess takes an earthly form to be near him and to help him in the fray."

## The Gaulish Religion.

The religion of the Gauls is the only Celtic religion of which we have any description, such as it is, left. Now, we should be justified in assuming that the Gaulish religion is fairly representative of what the old religion of the British and Irish Celts was, even though we had not Tacitus' direct testimony to this being the case. The descriptions we have of the Gaulish religion are sufficiently meagre. Three chapters of Cæsar, a few lines from Diodorus, Mela, and Strabo, some scattered allusions in Pliny, five lines from Lucan, and a statement from the Greek Timagenes reproduced in Ammianus Marcellinus, are practically all our authorities. The statues and inscriptions preserved to our time are almost our only authority for the names of the deities; while the calendar of the Church saints, local festivities and traditions, render some little help in this and also in matters of ritual.

Cæsar's sketch of the Gaulish pantheon, though meagre, is yet the best. We owe it entirely to the fact that for practical purposes the Gaulish religion was much the same as the Roman, with the exception of Druidism, which he doubtless saw would be a source of danger, unless it could be assimilated to Roman ideas and practices. We are, therefore, prepared, from our knowledge of the Aryan descent of the Celts, to believe what Cæsar says when he writes that the ideas of the Gauls with regard to the gods were much the same as those of other nations, meaning especially Romans and Greeks. He tells us that the god most worshipped was Mercury; that is to say, the Gaulish god was not named Mercury, but corresponded in his attributes to that Roman deity. Cæsar, unfortunately, does not record the native names for these deities. They regarded Mercury as the inventor of arts, presiding over trade and commerce, and means of communication between people. After him came the deities

answering to the Roman Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva; Apollo drove away diseases, Minerva taught the useful arts of life, Jupiter held the sway of Heaven, and Mars ruled the department of war. To Mars they would vow what they should capture in war, and when they conquered they would sacrifice the cattle, and heap up the other wealth in mounds, in consecrated places, and no one would dare touch or steal these treasures, both from fear of the gods and from the extreme cruelty of the punishment that would follow detection. Cæsar also notices a feature of Celtic character which is still persistent in the race. The nation, he says, is very much given to religious matters. And on this account, he proceeds, those who are affected with diseases of a rather serious character, and those who are in great dangers, either sacrifice human beings, or make a vow to that effect; and at these sacrifices they employ the Druids. They think, he says, that the Deity cannot be appeased unless human life is given up for human life, and they have even national sacrifices of this kind. They make huge images of wickerwork, inside which they place human beings alive; and this they set on fire, and the victims perish. Generally the victims are criminals, but if criminals are wanting, they have recourse to innocent persons. These human sacrifices seem horrible to our modern minds, and to the Romans, though familiar with the idea of human sacrifice, for in the time of the Second Punic war, they, themselves, resorted in their religious terror to the sacrificing of a male and female Gaul, and it was not until the 1st century before Christ that the Senate formally forbade such sacrifices even in Rome—to the Romans even the Gauls appeared reckless in their massacres, such occurring, too, when there did not appear to be any special danger. Strabo says that it was a tenet of the Druids that the harvest would be rich in proportion to the richness of the harvest of death.

Another article of the Gaulish creed is given by Cæsar. The Gauls, he says, assert that they are all sprung from Pluto (the god of the lower world), for so the Druids teach. Hence, therefore, they reckon by nights instead of days. In regard to the belief which Cæsar records, it is probably only a mythical way of recording a belief common to most nations in their barbarous state, that they are the aboriginal inhabitants and sprung from the soil on which they dwell. As to the Gauls reckoning

blacken the heavens with clouds and wind, or drive in the tempest with chariot and horses of fire." The Irish *Dinn-Senchus* mentions this "thunder" god as "Etirun, an idol of the Britons."

Two other names of deities are preserved to us in the classical writers. Lucian speaks of a sort of Gaulish Hercules, represented as an old man drawing a large multitude after him by cords fastened to their ears and his tongue, and he was their god of letters and eloquence, and they called him Ogmios. This name appears afterwards as that of the Irish sacred or runic alphabet, so named from its inventor, Ogma, the son of Elathan, evidently a degraded deity. Again, one or two other writers mention the god Belenus, a name common in inscriptions and in proper names of persons. The inscriptions also give, according to the Gallo-Romanic habit, the Latin God as well, with whom he was identified: we have such a combination often as Belenus Apollo, thus making him the equivalent to the Roman sun and healing-god. This Belenus is the famous deity of the Druids according to the school of Neo-Druidists, the investigators into the system of the Druids, lately rampant among us. As a rule, Belenus, or rather Bel, as he was called by them, was identified with the Phenician Baal, and no end of theories were started on such suppositions. The word Belenus may, however, be from the same root as Apollo, and probably is from that root, as Mr Moberly has pointed out in his notes to Caesar. That his worship was connected with solar rites is evident from the manner in which Ausonius describes his temple at Bayeux; but he was also especially connected with health-giving waters and herbs, and was worshipped at medicinal resorts under various local titles, the most important of which are Borvo (Bourbon) and Grannus. The latter title is doubtless connected with the Gaelic *grian*, sun, and it is interesting to note that an altar was once found at Inveresk with the inscription, "Apollini Granno," which clearly shows the worship of this sun-god in ancient Scotland. It is probably in connection with the service of Belenus that the cutting of the mistletoe took place, as related by Pliny. The passage is given either in full or in abstract in almost all our school books of history, and it is there wrongly given out as a "Druidic" rite. It is merely a case of herb worship, common to all nations. The mistletoe is far more famous in Teutonic Mythology, and the gallant rites at modern

Christmases are merely a remembrance of its ancient efficacy as a preserver and defender from harm. Pliny tells us that on the sixth day of the moon, the commencement of the Gaulish month, a Druid or priest, clothed in white, mounted the tree and cut the plant with a golden sickle. It was received on a white cloth, and two white bulls were sacrificed, while the people burst forth in prayer for the favour of the god. The mistletoe was supposed thus to be a cure for sterility, and a safeguard against poisons. This is just merely a form of *fetishism.*

The Gaulish inscriptions give us quite a host of minor deities. The Roman system of assimilating conquered peoples appears extremely well in these inscriptions; in nearly every case the Roman deity is given as the principal name to which is attached as epithet the local Gaulish equivalent. We, therefore, meet with combinations like these: "Marti Segomoni," "Marti Caturigi," "Mercurio Artaio," "Iovi Bagniati," "Apollini Virotuti," etc. The Gaulish and British goddess, Belisama, is the most important to notice; she answered to the Latin Minerva, goddess of arts, who, along with "Mercury," was the most human of all the deities of Gaul. The goddesses of the healing springs were honoured as the companions of Apollo. "Divine beings everywhere mediated between man and heaven." Fountains, rivers, and hills had their deities, and the sea-nymph of the Breton shore is still revered under the title of St Anne. Every village was protected by local deities, with the generic title of "Matris" or "Mothers," names which appear in great numbers on the inscriptions, and which survive, we are told, in mediæval legends as the White Ladies, the "Three Fairies," the Weird Sisters, and the Wild Women of the Woods. Some, again, of the lesser deities appear as the giants of our folk-tales. Such has been the fate of "Gargantua," an old Gaulish deity of Normandy, whose festivals are not unknown yet, and whose fame appears on the pages of Rabelais. There were also innumerable private or family gods, answering to the Roman Penates and Lares, of whom inscriptions and statues testify.

## Druidism.

One feature of the Gaulish religion still remains to be discussed, and that, too, perhaps its most important one. We have discussed the religious beliefs of the people, but not their ecclesias-

tical polity. This is known as Druidism, although that term is commonly made to include all that we know of the Gaulish religion as well. But the Druids were rather the philosophers and divines of the Gauls; and, as what we know of their opinions and practices is somewhat remarkable, it is better not to confuse their system with the ordinary Aryan religion of the Gauls. Here, again, it must be repeated that our information is meagre; in fact, with regard to the Druids no less meagre, and far more unsatisfactory than our comparatively poor information about their general religion. Indeed, with the addition of two chapters in Cæsar, a sentence in Cicero, and nigh a dozen lines of Lucan, our authorities for Druidism are included in the enumeration already made in regard to Gaulish religion in general. No monuments or inscriptions can help us, nor can we trust in the slightest degree the references made to Druidism by early Irish or Welsh writers: the Druids of Irish history are mere conjurors and magicians. Neither can any customs or religious survivals be referred to Druidic belief or usage. But it may be at the start premised that there is, perhaps, little to know, and that it is entirely due to Cæsar's account of them, probably itself somewhat exaggerated in its political aspect, and certainly misread by modern writers under the influence of their knowledge of mediæval ecclesiasticism, that this exaggerated opinion of Druidism is prevalent. So little is known, and the little that is known is so interesting, that it opened quite a new world for fancies and speculations. "Omne ignotum pro magnifico est;" the unknown passes for the magnificent. Here was an unknown and unknowable land, where in circular temples of stone, and mid groves of oak, in vestments of stainless white, and ornaments of glittering gold, stalked majestically the Druids, holding high converse with their disciples on the nature of the one God—for such philosophers could only be monotheists!—on the immortality of the soul, the courses of the stars, and, in fact, on all the mighty problems of life. Dr Smith tells us that they alone kept the first tradition of monotheism intact in the West; and Reynaud, but a generation ago, found in their human sacrifices only the consequence of the idea, dominant now as in the days of the Druids, that the higher the victim the more complete the atonement offered to the Deity for the sins of man. John Toland, at the

end of the 17th century, an Irishman of fertile imagination and advanced opinions, possessed of no small learning, was the first to lead the way into the undiscovered country of Druidism. The references in Pliny were made to disclose a pomp and ritual that could vie with the best days of the Church of Rome; surplices of white—incidentally worn, as may be seen from Pliny—were their usual dress, with golden ornaments, sacrifice utensils and amulets, all of gold. The megalithic monuments—circles, cromlechs, and menhirs, were of course their work—their temples and their altars, and these also showed their knowledge of the mechanical powers. Nay, cairns and barrows were Druidic remains, and vitrified forts! Everything unexplained in archæological monuments, in social customs, and in proverbial language must be Druidic. Dr Smith, of the "Seann Dana," followed Toland and made a most unscrupulous use of his classical authorities. Welsh and French writers took the same view of the old religion of Gaul, and Celtomania reigned supreme in this obscure region, until lately the light of modern criticism was allowed to shine through the overhanging mist of nonsensical speculation.

All that can with certainty be known of the Druids will first be briefly given, apart from any personal theories. Cæsar is again our first and best authority. In the digression in his 6th book, on the manners and customs of the Gauls and Germans, he tells us that all men of any consideration or position were included among either the Druids or the nobles. The Druids conduct public and private sacrifices, and interpret omens. Young men flock to them for instruction; and they are held in great honour, for they have the decision of all controversies, public and private; they are judges in cases of crime, murder, and disputes in regard to succession or boundaries; and whoever abides not by their decision is excommunicated—a most severe punishment, for such are reckoned sacrilegists, and men flee from their presence for fear of disaster from contact with them. A chief Druid presides over them, having supreme authority. He may be elected with or without voting, and they at times resort to war to decide the matter. They meet at an appointed time of the year in the territories of the Carnutes, in the middle of Gaul, where there is a consecrated place; and there all come who have disputes, and abide by their decisions. It is thought that the system was found

in Britain, and thence transferred to Gaul, and those who at the present time wish to know it thoroughly, as a rule proceed there to learn it. The Druids are wont to hold aloof from war, and pay no taxes, being thus free from military service and civil duties. Under the inducement of such great rewards, many come themselves into their ranks, or are sent by their parents and friends. With them they learn off a great number of lines of poetry, so that some remain under training for twenty years. And they do not regard it allowable by divine laws to commit these things to writing, though in secular matters they use Greek letters. The reason for this seems to be twofold, that they do not wish either their system to be made public, or their pupils to fail to cultivate their memory by trusting to writing, as generally happens when books can be resorted to. Their chief doctrine is that souls do not perish, but pass after death from one individual to another, and this—the removal of the fear of death—they think the greatest incitement to valour. They theorise largely on astronomy, on the size of the universe and the earth, on nature, and on the power and might of the gods, and in these matters they instruct the youth. Cæsar further on tells that the Druids presided at the human sacrifices, and in the 7th book he gives us to know that the Æduan magistrates, at least, were elected by them. Cicero, in his treatise on "Divination," written a few years later, introduces his brother Quintus as saying: "The principles of divination are not overlooked among barbarous nations even, as, for instance, in Gaul there are the Druids, one of whom Divitiacus, the Æduan, I knew; he was a guest of yours and great in your praises. He professed to know natural philosophy, which the Greeks call 'physiology,' and he used to tell partly by augury, partly by conjecture, what was to happen in the future." Cicero's contemporary, Diodorus Siculus, tells us that among the Gauls were bards, certain philosophers and divines named Druids, and soothsayers, adding that "the system of Pythagoras held sway among them," that is, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. To this doctrine Valerius Maximus refers when he says: "One would have laughed at these long-trousered philosophers [the Druids], if we had not found their doctrine under the cloak of Pythagoras." Strabo, his contemporary, in the first century of our era, gives us a short account of the Druids, half of which is but a variation of

Cæsar's sketch. "Amongst the Gauls," he says, "there are generally three divisions of men, especially reverenced, the Bards, the Vates, and the Druids. The bards composed and chanted hymns; the Vates occupied themselves with the sacrifices and the study of nature; while the Druids joined to the study of nature that of moral philosophy. The belief in their justice is so great that the decision both of public and private disputes is referred to them, and they have before now by their decision prevented battle. All cases of murder are particularly referred to them. When there are plenty of these they imagine there will be a plentiful harvest. Both these and the others [Bards and Vates] assert that the soul is indestructible and likewise the world, but that fire and water will one day have the mastery." And further on he says that without the Druids the Gauls never sacrifice.

Another geographer, Pomponius Mela, refers to the Druids, but adds nothing to our knowledge, merely echoing Cæsar's description. Lucan, who died in 65, has been quoted in the former section for the names of the Gaulish gods; but he further proceeds to describe, after a reference to the Bards, the barbarous rites of the Druids and their theology. The passage is mostly an expansion of Cæsar's reference to the transmigration of souls, but the poet beautifully brings out how "Pluto's gloomy reign" is not the habitation of souls, but that—

> "Forth they fly immortal in their kind,
> And other bodies in new worlds they find;
> Thus life for ever runs its endless race,
> And like a line death but divides the space.
> Thrice happy they beneath their northern skies,
> Who that worst fear—the fear of death—despise;
> Hence they no cares for this frail being feel,
> But rush undaunted on the pointed steel;
> Provoke approaching fate and bravely scorn
> To spare that life which must so soon return."

The writer on the Druids, next in importance to Cæsar, is Pliny the Elder. He has several interesting allusions to them and their superstitions. At the end of his 16th book he mentions the admiration of the Gauls for the mistletoe. "The Druids," he says "(for so they name their *magi*) hold nothing more sacred than the mistletoe, and the tree on which it grows, provided it be the oak. They choose groves of that tree, and conduct no sacri-

fice without a garland of its leaves, so that we may possibly suppose the Druids are so called from its Greek name [*drus*]. Whatever grows on the oak is considered a gift from heaven." And he proceeds to tell how it was culled from the tree, as has already been told. Pliny mentions other plant superstitions of the Gauls, connecting the rites naturally enough with the Druids who presided. The next important *fetish* he mentions is the club-moss (selago); it must be touched by no metal, but plucked by the right hand passed through the tunic under the left, with a thievish gesture; the worshipper must be dressed in white, with feet washed and bare; and the plant must be carried in a new cloth. The Druids held that it was a charm against all misfortunes, and the smoke of its burning leaves cured diseases of the eye. In much the same way they thought the "samolus," or water pimpernel, a talisman against murrain in cattle. Vervain was another plant, "about which the Gaulish *magi* raged," which cured everything, and had to be gathered at the rise of the dog-star, and when neither sun nor moon was seen. But these plant superstitions and ceremonies have nothing especially "Druidic" about them; they are common among other nations as well. Pliny's account of the serpent's egg—the *anguinum*—is more important and special. The snake's egg was said to be produced from the frothy sweat of a number of serpents writhing in an entangled mass, and to be tossed up into the air as soon as formed. The Druid who was fortunate enough to catch it in his cloak as it fell rode off at full speed, pursued by the serpents, until stopped by a running stream. If tried, the egg would swim in water though cased in gold. Pliny says he saw one himself, "about the size of a moderately large apple, with a cartilaginous rind, studded with cavities like the arms of a polypus." A Roman knight was making use of it in court to gain an unfair verdict, and for this was put to death by Claudius the Emperor. And, lastly, in speaking of magic and its "vanities," he says that "Britain celebrates them to-day with such ceremonies that it might seem possible that she taught magic to the Persians," and "Gaul was overrun with magic arts even up to our own time, until Tiberius Cæsar did away with the Druids and this class of prophets and medicine-men." This passage has puzzled many commentators, for if the Druids were done away with, how does

Pliny elsewhere mention them as still existent in Gaul? And to add to the difficulty, Suetonius, a generation later, says that "Claudius abolished entirely the religion of the Druids, a religion of dreadful barbarity, and forbidden only the Roman citizens under Augustus." Pliny and Suetonius do not agree as to which Emperor abolished Druidism, nor can we well believe that it was altogether abolished even then: it would appear that only the human sacrifices and certain modes of divination were put a stop to. Strabo, indeed, says as much; and we can see from Tacitus that the prophecies of the Druids incurred political wrath as late as Vespasian's time—after the abolition of Druidism, according to Pliny. Human sacrifices and, probably, meddling in politics were sure to bring the wrath of Rome on the system. Tacitus gives us an insight of how at times the Romans did put a stop to these phases of Druidism. In describing the attack of the Romans on Mona, or Anglesea, he represents the legions as awe-struck by the appearance of the Druids amid their opponents' ranks, pouring curses and vengeance on their heads, with hands upraised to heaven. But they were rolled in their own fires, and the groves sacred to grim superstitions were cut down; "for," he adds, "they hold it lawful to sacrifice captives at their altars and to consult the gods from the movements of human entrails." After the first century, writers speak of Druidism as a thing of the past; evidently the decrees of the Emperors had done away with its fiercer elements of superstition, and the purer and more philosophical parts had been absorbed into the usual Roman faith. Christianity, at least, had no contest with Druidism either in Gaul or in England. It may be mentioned that Ammianus Marcellinus, in the fourth century, gives us a few lines on the old and long extinct Druidism. After noticing the foundation of Marseilles by a Phocean colony, he says that when the people in those parts got gradually civilised, the learned studies which had been begun by the bards, the Euhages (probably a corruption of Vates) and the Druids, throve vigorously. Of these, he says, the Druids were the intellectual superiors of the others, and were formed into unions in accordance with the precepts of Pythagoras, where deep and hidden problems were discussed, and looking from a lofty philosophic pinnacle on human affairs, they pronounced human souls immortal.

Such is the history of Druidism in Gaul and early Britain: of its course in Ireland we have no direct information. It is only when Christianity has been long established, and Druidism a thing of the remote past, that we have writers who speak of the Druids; and in their eyes the Druids were but magicians that attended the courts of the pagan kings. The lives of the pioneer saints, Patrick and Columba, are full of contests between themselves and the royal magicians, who are called in the Gaelic *Druid* and in the Latin versions *Magi*. But in all the numerous references to them in Irish chronicles and tales there is no hint given of Druidism being either a system of philosophy or religion: the Druids of Irish story are mere magicians and diviners, sometimes only conjurors. But as such—as magicians—the Druids play a most important part in Irish pagan history, as chronicled by the long posterior Christian writers. From the primæval landing of Partholan with his three Druids, to the days of Columba, we have themselves and the bards exercising magic and divining powers. The second fabled settlers of Ireland, the Nemedians, meet the invading Fomorians with magic spells; but the fairy host of the Tuatha De Dannan are *par excellence* the masters of Druidic art. Their power over the forces of Nature—over sea, wind, and storms—shows them plainly to be only degraded gods, who allow the sons of Miled to land after showing them their power and sovereignty as deities over the island. The kings and chiefs had Druids about them to interpret omens and to work spells; but there is no reference to these Druids being a priestly class, and their power was limited to the functions of mere divination and sorcery. Two of the most famous Druids were Cathbadh, Druid of Conchobar Mac Nessa, the instructor of Cuchulain, who, among many other things, foretells the fate of Deirdre and the sons of Uisnach, even before Deirdre was born; and Mogh Ruith of Munster, who single-handed opposed Cormac and his Druids, and drove them by his magic fire and storm-spells out of Munster. The Druids of King Loegaire oppose St Patrick with their magic arts; one of them causes snow to fall so thickly that men soon find themselves neck-deep in it, and at another time he brings over the land an Egyptian darkness that might be felt. But the saint defeats them, even on their own ground, much as Moses defeats the Egyptian magicians. St

Columba, in Adamnan's life of him, is similarly represented as overcoming the spells of the Northern Druids. Broichan, Druid to King Brude, caused such a storm and darkness on Loch-Ness that the navigation appeared impossible, until the saint gave orders that the sails should be unfurled and a start made. Then everything became calm and settled. We are also told in many instances how the Druids worked these spells. A wisp of hay, over which an incantation was made, when cast on a person, caused idiocy and deformity. The Druidic wand plays an important part, a blow from it causing transformations and spells. It must be remarked, too, that the wood used for wands and Druidic rites and fires was not the oak at all, as in Gaul: sacred wood among the Irish Druids would appear to have been the yew, hawthorn, and, more especially, the rowan tree. Divination was an important feature of Druidic accomplishments, and there were various forms of it. Pure Druidic divination sometimes consisted in watching the Druidic fire—how the smoke and flame went. Sometimes the Druid would chew a bit of raw flesh with incantation or "oration" and an invocation to the gods, and then generally the future was revealed to him. Sometimes, if this failed, he had to place his two hands upon his two cheeks and fall into a divine sleep, a method known as "illumination by the palms of the hands." Fionn used to chew his thumb when he wanted any supernatural knowledge. The bards, too, were diviners at times, a fact that would appear to show their ancient connection with the Druids. The bardic divination is known as "illumination by rhymes," when the bard in an ecstatic state pours forth a flood of poetry, at the end of which he brings out the particular fact that is required to be known. Connected with this is the power of poetic satire. If a man refused a gift, the bard could satirise him in such a way that personal injury would result, such as blisters and deformities.

Irish Druidism consists, therefore, merely of magic and divination; it is not a philosophy, nor a religion, nor a system. It is quite true that we have, at least, an echo now and then of the time when Druidism in Ireland and Scotland was something different, and when even human sacrifices were offered. Columba, in commencing the building of his church at Iona, addressed his followers in words which clearly point to human sacrifice. "It is

good for us," says he, "that our roots should go under the earth here; it is permitted that one of you should go under the clay of this island to hallow it." The story goes on to say that Odran arose readily, and spoke thus: "If thou shouldst take me, I am ready for that." Columba readily accepted his offer, and "then Odran went to heaven, and Columba founded the church of Hi." It is said that a human being was slain at the foundation of Emain, the mythic capital of Ulster; and in Nennius we have a remarkable story told of King Vortigern. He was trying to build a castle on Snowdon, but somehow, though he gathered ever so much material, every time it was "spirited" away during the night. He sought counsel from his "magi" (the Irish translation calls them Druids), and they told him that he must find a child born without a father, and must put him to death, and sprinkle with his blood the ground where the castle was to stand. Nor is tradition of the present time silent on this matter. It is said that Tigh-a-chnuic, Kilcoy, in the Black Isle, had its foundation consecrated by the slaughter of a stranger who chanced to be passing when the house was to be built, but unfortunately his ghost used to haunt the house until he was able to disburden his woes to somebody, and he then disappeared.

The sum and result of our inquiry into Druidism may be given in the words of Professor Rhys:—"At the time of Cæsar's invasions, they were a powerful class of men, monopolizing the influence of soothsayers, magicians, and priests. But in Gaul, under the faint rays of the civilization of Marseilles and other Mediterranean centres, they seem to have added to their other characters that of philosophers, discoursing to the youths, whose education was entrusted to them, on the stars and their movements, on the world and its countries, on the nature of things, and the power of the gods." Whether the doctrine of the transmigration of souls was really of native origin or borrowed from the Greeks, must remain an open question. Some think it unlikely that the central doctrine of Druidism should have been derived so late in the history of the nation, or derived at all, from a foreign source, and they appeal to the fact that Britain was the home of Druidism, a country which could have had little intercourse with Marseilles. But in connection with this idea of its British origin, it must be remembered that at a certain stage of

culture, nations are apt to consider their neighbours, provided they are in a lower stage of civilization, much more religious than themselves. The Romans always believed the Etrurians to be more versed in religious matters than themselves. So, too, the Gauls probably looked on British Druidism, with its "pristine grimness" of practices, as the source of their own, while in reality their own was doubtless an independent but more enlightened development. Professor Rhys considers Druidism to be of a non-Aryan character, and calls it the religion of the pre-Celtic tribes, from the Baltic to Gibraltar. Now, in what we have left us recorded of Druidism there is absolutely nothing that can be pointed to as non-Aryan. The strong priestly caste presented to us in Cæsar, as divided off from the nobles and the commons, can be somewhat paralleled in the Hinduism of India with its rigidly priestly caste of Brahmans, who monopolised all religious rites. And Brahmanism is an Aryan religion. Among the Gauls, from the superstitious cast of their minds, a priestly class was sure to rise to a position of supreme power. Their human sacrifices can be matched, in some degree, by actual instances of such, and by rites which pointed to them as previously existent, among other Aryan nations, including those of Greece and Rome; only here, as before, the impressionable and superstitious character of the Gauls drove them to greater excesses. The doctrine of the transmigration of the soul is a tenet of both Brahmans and Buddhists, of Aryan India, and it found its classical development in the views of the Greek Pythagoras. The position and fame of the Druids as magicians is, as Pliny points out, of the same nature as those of the Magi of Aryan Persia. Some again think it absurd that if the Druids were such philosophers, as they are represented to have been, they would be so superstitious as to practise human sacrifices, and other wild rites. But there is no incongruity in at once being philosophic and superstitious; the human mind is very hospitable in its entertainment of quite opposite opinions, especially in moral and religious matters; for there is a wide difference between theories of the intellect and practices prompted by the emotions.

## Celtic Religion in Britain and Ireland.

In tracing the history of Celtic religion, we have established

that the religion of the Gauls fully represents the pagan religion of both the great branches of the Celtic race — the Brythonic (Gauls and Welsh) and the Goidelic (Gaelic races). From Cæsar's account of the religion of the Gauls to the first native notices of even the history of Celtic Britain and Ireland, there is practically a period of a thousand years. During the interval, Christianity had established its sway, nominally at least, over the whole land, and paganism was for centuries a thing of the past. It may, however, be remarked that one or two Latin ecclesiastical histories appeared in the eighth century—notably the works of Adamnan and Bede, but we in vain scan the pages left us of their works for any definite information as to the previous religion. Gildas, a century before either of these writers, makes only a passing reference to the old faith. "I shall not," says he, "enumerate those diabolical idols of my country, which almost surpassed in number those of Egypt, and of which we still see [circ. A.D. 560] some mouldering away within or without the deserted temples, with stiff and deformed features as was customary. Nor will I call out upon the mountains, fountains, or hills, or upon the rivers, which now are subservient to the use of men, but once were an abomination and destruction to them, and to which the blind people paid divine honour." Our knowledge of the local development of Celtic religion in Britain and Ireland cannot be obtained directly from contemporary history: we have, it is true, some British inscriptions of the Roman period, which give, mid a host of minor and local deities, one or two important gods. But our information must be drawn, nearly all, from the heroic poems and tales, which do not date much earlier than a thousand years ago; and most are far later than this period. For information as to the ritual of the old religion, local customs and superstitions—Beltaine bannocks and Samhuinn fires—form our only guides.

It will also be necessary to discuss separately the remains of the religion of the early Welsh and the early Gaels. The religion of the former we shall name "British," of the latter, "Gaelic." And it must be remembered that the Welsh are doubtless the remnant of the Gaulish population which, about the time of the Roman conquest, must have occupied England (except Cornwall and Wales) and Lowland Scotland. Gaul and England had, there-

fore, practically the same people and language in the first century of this era, and there now remain of them still speaking the language, the Bretons of France and the Welsh of Wales, from which country they drove out or absorbed the previous Gaelic population in the fifth century of our era, or thereabouts. The "Gaelic Religion" will include the early religion of Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland.

## British Religion.

The gods of Britain suffered what appears to have been the "common lot" of gods; they were changed into the kings and champions, the giants and enchanters, of heroic tales and folk-lore. In the words of the poet:—

> "Ye are gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.
> In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
> Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings."

The great deity, "Belinus," appears in the pages of Geoffrey, of Monmouth, as a mere mortal conqueror. In company with his brother, Brennius or "Bran," he marched to the siege of Rome, when "Gabius and Porsena" were consuls! Gargantua appears twice as a British King, under the title of Gurgiunt. Camulus, the war-god, who gave his name to Camulodunum, now *Col*-chester, is presented as Coel Hen, "Old King Coul" of the song, who gave his name to the Ayrshire district of Kyle. The god, "Nodens," is the Nudd of Welsh, and King Nuada, of Irish story; and Lir, the sea-god, is immortalised in the pages of Shakespeare as an old British king. Some of the gods fight under Arthur's banner, and perish on the battlefield of Camlan, along with him. There is, consequently, a considerable amount of confusion in the Welsh tales, which does not appear in the more consistent tales of Ireland. Probably, there were kings of the names of Beli, Coel, Urien, and Arthur, and there certainly were kings and chiefs, of the names of Brennus, Cassibelaunus, and Caractacus, but their history is irretrievably mixed up with that of deities and demigods, possessed of similar names. Thus, Bran the Blessed, is a son of Lir, a personage of such gigantic proportions that no house could hold him, and evidently a degraded god, possibly a war-god. He next appears as father of Caradoc, for whom he is sent as hostage to Rome, when the latter is con-

quered by Claudius. In Rome he is converted to Christianity, which he introduced into Britain, and hence his name of "Bran the Blessed." And again he is brother of Belinus, and the same as the Brennus of the Roman historians, who sacked Rome in B.C. 390. It is, therefore, a matter of great difficulty to take either history or myth out of the confusion in Welsh poetry and tradition, caused by a little knowledge of classical and Biblical history, a history which is interwoven with native myths and facts.

The inscriptions of Roman times show that the religious condition of Britain then differed in no respect from that of Gaul. The local deities were assimilated to the corresponding deities of Rome, and we have in Britain combinations like those met with in Gaul: the Roman deity has the corresponding British name attached to him on the votive inscription by way of epithet. Thus, at Bath, altars are dedicated to Sul-Minerva, Sul being a goddess unknown elsewhere. On the Roman wall, between the Forth and Clyde, the name of Mars-Camulus appears on the inscriptions, among many others to the "genii" of the places, the spirits of "the mountain and the flood," and to "Sancta Britannia" and "Brigantia," the goddesses of Britain and the land of the Brigantes respectively. The most interesting inscriptions were those found in the temple of a god discovered at Lydney Park, in Gloucestershire, One inscription bears to be to the "great god Nodon," which proves the temple to have been dedicated to the worship of Nodon, a god of the deep sea, figured on a bronze plaque as a Triton or Neptune borne by sea-horses and surrounded by a laughing crowd of Nereids. This deity is identified with the legendary Nudd, known in Welsh fiction only as the father of famous sons and in Irish story as King Nuada of the Silver Hand, who fought the two battles of Moytura, and fell in the second before "Balor of the Evil Eye," the King of the Fomorians.

Passing, however, to the Welsh legends and myths preserved in the "Ancient Books of Wales" and in the prose "Mabinogion," we can easily eliminate three principal families of deities, the children of "Don," of "Nudd," and of "Lir." Of these the first are purely Welsh, the second—the children of Nudd—have Irish equivalents both in name and office, while the children of Lir belong equally to both nations. The family of Don is evidently

connected with the sky and its changes. He has given his name in Welsh to the constellation of Cassiopeia, called Llys Don, the court of Don. The milky way is named after his son, Gwydion, Caer Gwydion, the city of Gwydion; and his daughter Arianrhod, "silver-circled," inhabits the bright circle of stars which is called the Northern Crown. With the name Don may be compared that of the father of the Irish hero Diarmat, son of Donn. Gwydion is the greatest of enchanters—a prince of the powers of air. He can change the forms of trees, men, and animals, and along with "Math, the son of Mathonwy," his master, styled by Professor Rhys, the Cambrian Pluto, though rather a god of air than earth, he forms a woman out of flowers. "They took the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden, the fairest and most graceful that man ever saw." Amaethon, the son of Don, is a husbandman—doubtless a god of weather and crops. He has a fight with Arawn, king of Annwn, or Hell, for a white roebuck and a whelp, which he had carried off from the realms of darkness. The battle is known as the "battle of the trees," and in it Gwydion, by his divinations, won the victory for his brother, for he guessed the name of the person in the ranks of his opponents, which had to be guessed before either side won.

Nudd, like Don, is eclipsed by his family. He appears to have been god of the deep and its treasures. His son Gwynn, known always as Gwynn ap Nudd, is the Welsh king of the Fairies in the widest sense of the word. It would appear that Gwynn is no less a person than the god of the next world for human beings. He answers, therefore, to the king of "Tir-nan-og," "Land of Youth" of the Irish legends, and "Tir-fo-Thuinn" of the Gaelic stories—the land below the waves. The son of the deep-sea god is naturally enough made lord over the happy realm under the waves of the West. Christian bias, however, gave Gwynn a more sinister position. We are told that God placed him over the brood of devils in Annwn, lest they should destroy the present race. A Saint of the name of Collen one day heard two men conversing about Gwynn ap Nudd, and saying that he was King of Annwn and the Fairies. "Hold your tongue quickly," says Collen, "these are but devils." "Hold thou thy

tongue," said they, "thou shalt receive a reproof from him." And sure enough the Saint was summoned to the palace of Gwynn on a neighbouring hill top, where he was kindly received, and bid sit down to a sumptuous repast. "I will not eat the leaves of the trees," said Collen; for he saw through the enchantments of Gwynn, and, by the use of some holy water, caused Gwynn and his castle to disappear in the twinkling of an eye. The story is interesting, as showing how the early missionaries dealt with the native gods. Gwynn, according to St Collen, is merely a demon. His connection with the lower world is brought out by his fight with Gwythyr, the son of Greidwal, for Cordelia, the daughter of Lir or Lud. She is represented as a splendid maiden, daughter of the sea-god Lir, "a blossom of flowering seas," at once a Venus and a Proserpine, goddess of the summer flowers, for whom there is a fight between the powers of the worlds above and below the earth respectively. Peace was made between these two deities on these conditions: "that the maiden should remain in her father's house, without advantage to either of them, and that Gwynn ap Nudd, and Gwythyr, the son of Greidwal, should fight for her every first of May, from thenceforth till the day of doom, and that whichever of them should be conqueror then, should have the maiden."

We have thus discovered in Don and his children the powers of sky and air, answering to Jove and his Olympians of Classical Mythology; in Nudd and his son Gwynn we have probably found the powers that rule over the land of "shades," corresponding to Pluto or Dis; and we now come to consider the third family of British deities, Lir and his children, whom we shall find to be the British and Gaelic equivalents of Neptune, the sea-god, and Aphrodite, "daughter of the foam." Lir, or as the Welsh spell the name, Llyr, is the same as the Gaelic *lear*, found in the Ossianic poems, and signifying the "sea." Lir is therefore the personification of the sea—the sea deified. He is a deity common to both Britons and Gaels; indeed, it may rather be said that he is more properly a deity of the Gaels transferred into the British pantheon. The epithet *Llediaith*, or "half-speech," that is, "dialect," which is attached to his name, goes to show that he was not a deity of native British origin. We are therefore justified in considering Lir as the sea deity of the

ancient remnant of the Gaels still surviving and maintaining their ground in Wales in the fifth century, and represented as then expelled by Cunedda and his sons. They were, however, more probably slowly absorbed by the Welsh, who were then pressed westwards by the Saxons. All the legends preserved in Welsh, connected with Lir and his family, point to a strong Gaelic influence, if not to a Gaelic origin. Of Lir himself nothing is said in the Welsh legends beyond his being the father of so many children; in Ireland he is represented as striving for the sovereignty of the Tuatha-De-Dannan, the Gaelic gods, with Bove Derg, son of the Dagda, and, when defeated in his aspirations, as retiring to Sidh-Fionnachaidh. Here he leads the life of a provincial chief, and all else that we know of him is the cruel transformation of his four children by their wicked aunt and stepmother. Lir has also another name; at least he must have had another name, or else Mannanan, his son, and Cordelia, his daughter, must each have had two fathers. In some traditions they are both represented as the children of Llud. The same confusion, of course, appears in the Irish genealogy of Mannanan; for the most part he is known as the son of Lir, but in the genealogies he is set down as the son of Alloid, doubtless the original, or, at least, the equivalent of Llud. Professor Rhys thinks that Llud stands for Nudd, the N changing into Ll, because Llud also received the title of Llaw Ereint, "silver-handed," just as the Irish King Nuadà did; and the principle of alliteration required the changing of Nudd Llaw Ereint into Llud Llaw Ereint. And Nudd, besides, was somehow a god of the sea; what was the necessity of two chief sea-gods? We have interpreted Nudd as a god of the "land under the waves," and not as the sea-god proper; and, again, the Irish Alloid is distinctly against any such change of letters as Nudd into Llud, besides its being otherwise far from probable that such a change should occur on any principle of alliteration. Lir, under the name of Llud, is, in the histories and tales, the brother of Cassibelaunus, Cæsar's opponent, and in his reign Britain was troubled with three direful plagues: the Coranians, a people "whose knowledge was such that there was no discourse upon the face of the Island, however it might be spoken, but what, if the wind blew it, it was known to them;" second, a shriek that

occurred every May eve, that created all kinds of terrors and horrors; and, third, the king's winter provisions disappeared every year when stored. From these plagues the wisdom of his brother Llevelys freed King Llud. Lir appears in the pages of Geoffrey of Monmouth as an old British king, who reigned long before Llud, and who had three daughters, whose story forms the groundwork of Shakespeare's tragedy of King Lear.

Mannanan, the son of Lir, is in the Welsh Myths one of the seven—that mystical number, so common in the old Welsh poems—who escaped from Ireland on the death of his brother, Bran, the blessed, king of Britain. Returning with the head of Bran, the seven heroes found the throne usurped by Cassibelaunus and retired to Harlech, where the birds of Rhiannon kept them enchanted by their music for seven years; and after this they feasted for eighty years more at Gwales in Penvro, from which place they set out to London and buried Bran's head with its face to France. As long as Bran's head was left there facing France no invasion of Britain could be successful. Unfortunately Arthur exhumed the head, declaring that he would maintain the country against any foe without need of supernatural safeguard. In his subsequent career Mannanan is seen to be a deity who presides over arts and commerce, a god who is "deep in counsel." He and another of the mythic seven wander about doing artificers' work; he successively tries saddlemaking, shoemaking, and shieldmaking, trades in which he out-distances all competitors as a matter of course. From the Irish accounts of him, Mannanan Mac Lir, appears to be a god of sea and wind. Cormac, Archbishop of Cashel, of the ninth century, describes him in his glossary like a true Euhemerist, as "*Manannan mac lir*, a renowned trader who dwelt in the Island of Man. He was the best pilot in the west of Europe. Through acquaintance with the sky he knew the quarter in which would be fair weather and foul weather, and when each of these two seasons would change. Hence the Scots and Britons called him a god of the sea, and hence they said he was son of the sea, that is, *mac lir*, 'son of the sea.'" Mannanan is otherwise represented as one of the Tuatha-De-Dannan chiefs. He was the possessor of that wonderful steed mentioned in the story of the "Children of Tuireann." Luga of the Long Arms "rode

the steed of Mannanan Mac Lir, namely Enbarr of the Flowing Mane: no warrior was ever killed on the back of this steed, for she was as swift as the cold clear wind of spring, and she travelled with equal ease on land and on sea. He wore Mannanan's coat of mail; no one could be wounded through it, or above it or below it. He had on his breast Mannanan's breast-plate, which no weapon could pierce. Mannanan's sword, The Answerer, hung at his left side; no one ever recovered from its wound; and those who were opposed to it in the battle-field were so terrified by looking at it that their strength left them and they became weaker than women." In the curious story called the "Sick-bed of Cuchulainn," Mannanan is represented as a fairy chief who deserts his fairy bride Fand, but Fand is helped and loved by Cuchulainn, mortal though he was. Mannanan on discovering this, returns to his wife and shakes his magic cloak between her and Cuchulainn, so that they should never meet again. This magic cloak had also the effect of producing forgetfulness of the past. Of Mannanan, Mr Elton says: "In him we see personified the splendour and swiftness of the sun; the god rushes over the waves like a 'wheel of fire' and his three-legged shape recalls the giant strides of Vishnu. He was the patron of traffic and merchandise. The best weapons and jewels from across the sea were thought to be gifts from the god."

Branwen, "white-bosom," the daughter of Lir, is the central figure of the most tragic of Welsh myths. She is married to Matholwch, King of Ireland, who treats her badly. Her brother Bran, coming to know of it, invades Ireland. The Irish yield, and build a house big enough for Bran to enter into, a thing he never hitherto could get, so enormous was his size. But the Irish had decided to murder their guests at the first feast in the great house. The cleverness of one of Bran's men foils their purpose; there is, however, a general slaughter, in which the Irish have at first the best of it, for they possess a cauldron, into which, when any one is dipped that is dead, he comes to life hale and sound. But the cauldron is discovered by the already-mentioned one of Bran's men, and he breaks it. Bran is killed, and only seven return of his people to Wales. The story as a whole is a very widely-spread one; it appears in about a dozen forms in Teutonic lands—the Volsung Saga and the Nibelung story being the most

famous forms of it. Probably there are in the myth the evidences of a time when Celt and Teuton lived not too amicably together on the banks of the Rhine, a supposition which would obviate the necessity of supposing the Celtic version a borrowed one, inferior though it may be in some details. Another legend represents Branwen or Brangwaine as helping the loves, illicit though they be, of Tristram and Iseult. It is she that hands to Tristram the fateful love-potion which binds him irrevocably to Iseult. Hence Mr Elton considers her the Venus of the Northern Seas. Indeed, the sea was poetically named "the fountain of Venus," according to the Iolo MSS.; and a verse in the "Black Book of Carmarthen" gives this stanza:—

> "Accursed be the damsel
> Who, after the wailing,
> Let loose the Fountain of Venus, the raging deep."

From this we can easily understand how Branwen may be Venus and daughter of the sea-god as well, just as Aphrodite was sprung from the foam of the sea. Cordelia, another daughter of Lear or Llud, has already been mentioned as the resplendent summer goddess for whom the powers of air and the shades fight every May-day till the day of doom.

In the remarkable Mabinogion entitled "Kilhwch and Olwen," so full of mythologic lore, we can see the true character of at least one of Arthur's knights. This is his seneschal Kai. From the references in this mythic tale, it could alone be proved that Kai was no less than the British Vulcan, the fire-god. "Kai," says the tale, "had this peculiarity, that his breath lasted nine nights and nine days under water, and he could exist nine days and nine nights without sleep. A wound from Kai's sword no physician could heal. Very subtle was Kai. When it pleased him he could render himself as tall as the highest tree in the forest. And he had another peculiarity: so great was the heat of his nature that when it rained hardest, whatever he carried remained dry for a handbreadth above and a handbreadth below his hand; and when his companions were coldest he was to them as fuel with which to light their fire." Such was Arthur's steward! Hephaestus and Vulcan do equally mean duties in the halls of Olympus. The gods laugh heartily at the limping gait and ungainly appearance of Hephaestus as he hands round the cup of

nectar. So is Kai often the butt of Arthur's knights. Another of Arthur's knights may be mentioned as probably a degraded war deity. Owain, the son of Urien Rheged, is never mentioned in the older poems and tales without reference to his army of ravens, "which rose as he waved his wand, and swept men into the air and dropped them piecemeal on the ground." We are here reminded of the Irish war goddess who so often appears as, and is indeed named, the "scald-crow" (*Badb*). Odin, too, has his ravens to consult with, and to act as his messengers. Many others of Arthur's heroes partake of the same mythical type; of Arthur himself we shall speak again in considering the Celtic hero-tales. At present, it is sufficient to say that Arthur is, at least, as mythical as any of the rest we have mentioned.

Nor must we overlook Caridwen, who is considered, even by the Welsh themselves, their goddess of nature. She is possessed of a cauldron of "inspiration and science," which, as Mr Nutt points out, may be regarded as a symbol of the reproductive power of the earth. It is doubtless this same cauldron that has appeared in the story of Branwen the daughter of Lir: when the dead heroes were plunged into it they were resuscitated. The Tuatha-De-Dannan were possessed in Scythia of a similar cauldron, similarly employed. Caridwen, the tale says, set her cauldron to boil, and placed Gwion Bach, the dwarf, and the blind Morda to watch it, charging them not to suffer it to cease boiling for a year and a day. Towards the end of the year, three drops of the boiling liquor spluttered out upon the hand of Gwion, and suddenly putting his hand in his mouth because of the heat, the future and present were revealed to him. The cauldron burst, the fairy returned, and Gwion had to run for his life. Pursued at once by Caridwen, he changed himself into a hare and fled. But she changed herself into a greyhound and turned him And he ran towards the river and became a fish; she took the form of an otter and gave chase. He then became a bird, and she a hawk, and as she was swooping down upon him he fell among a heap of wheat and became one of the grains. She, however, became a high-crested black hen, scratched the heap, found him, and swallowed him. He was thereafter born as a beautiful boy, whom Caridwen had not the heart to kill. She put him in a leather sack, and cast him into the sea. Being

washed ashore, he was discovered, and brought to Prince Elphin, to whom he immediately, child though he was, began to sing most elegant poetry. This youthful poet was none else than Taliesin, "prince of song, and the chief of the bards of the west." The poems ascribed to Taliesin have been called the romance of metempsychosis. "The Druidical doctrine of the transmigration of souls is thought to be hidden in the poet's account of his wonderful transformations." A specimen or two out of many such may be quoted.—

"I have been in a multitude of shapes,
Before I assumed a consistent form,
I have been a sword narrow, variegated,
I have been a tear in the air;
I have been the dullest of stars,
I have been a word among letters,
I have been a book in the origin."

And again—

"I have been a sow, I have been a buck,
I have been a sage, I have been a snout,
I have been a horn, I have been a wild sow,
I have been a shout in battle."

Evidently there is in these poems of Taliesin the broken-down remembrance of the old Druidic cult. True enough the poet does show a wonderful and suspicious acquaintance with the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid and his account of Pythagorean doctrines, as he also does with even Irish mythology, for he speaks of his place in S. Caer *Sidi*, doubtless the Irish *Side*, thus—

"Complete is my chair in Caer Sidi,
No one will be afflicted with disease or old age that may be in it."

Yet for all this, for all his mingling of Greek, Roman, and Jewish history and myth, we may believe that there is at bottom a germ of genuine Druidic influence, and of genuine Welsh myth. As a matter of fact, the tale of the cauldron appears in the history of the Gaelic counterpart of Taliesin —in the closing scenes of Ossian's career, and not at the beginning, as in Taliesin's case. Ossian, old and blind, tried to recover his youth by magical means. He now lived among little men who could not give him food enough, and consequently he had a belt round his waist with three skewers—*dealg*--in it to tighten his stomach. He went out one day with his gillie to hunt, and by some supernatural means brought down

three remarkable deer. These he took home and put in a cauldron to be cooked, bidding his gillie watch them, and on no account to taste any of the food. All went right for a time; the deer were cooked; Ossian ate the first and let out one skewer; he ate a second and let out a second skewer; but as misfortune would have it, while the third deer was simmering in the cauldron a drop of the broth spurted out on the gillie's hand, which he instantly put into his mouth. Ossian ate the third deer and let out the third skewer, but no youth returned to him. The licking of the little drop of broth had broken the spell. The supernatural knowledge and power gained by Gwion Bach do not, of course, appear in this tale, but it may be observed that Finn gained his knowledge of futurity in a manner which, though dissimilar in details, is yet the same in result. Following a strange woman that he saw one day, he came to a hill side, where she entered by a concealed door. Finn attempted to follow her inside, and had his hand on the door-post, when the door suddenly shut on him and jammed his thumb. With difficulty extricating his thumb, he very naturally shoved the hurt member into his mouth, when, lo! he found himself possessed of the gift of seeing future events. This gift, however, he possessed only when he bruised his thumb in his mouth.

## The Gaelic Gods in History.

Material for reconstructing the Olympus of the Gaels is not at all so scanty as we have found it to be in the case of the Welsh. There is, it is true, no general description of the Irish Olympus, but references to particular deities are not uncommon. The earliest reference to any Irish gods occurs in one of the oldest monuments we possess of the Gaelic language; a manuscript of the St Gall Monastery contains incantations to the powers Diancecht and Goibniu. This manuscript Zeuss sets down as of the eighth century, and it is, therefore, eleven hundred years old. Cormac's glossary, originally composed in the ninth century, mentions as deities Art, Ana, Buanann, Brigit, Neit, and Manannan. Keating quotes from the Book of Invasions a poem that makes the Dagda "king of heaven," and he further enumerates Badb, Macha, and Morrighan as the three goddesses of the Tuatha-de-Danann. The Tuatha-de-Danann themselves appear

often in the tales as the fairy host, the *Side* that dwell in the Land of Promise; they interfere in the affairs of mortals long after they are represented as having been expelled from Ireland, thus, if not actually mentioned as having been the pagan gods of the Gael, yet, despite the rampant Euhemerism of Irish tales and histories, implicitly considered as such. And again, by adopting the same method as in the case of the Welsh myths, we shall make the Irish myths and histories, with their imposing array of invasions and genealogies, deliver up the deities they have consigned to the ranks of kings and heroes.

We must, however, first briefly indicate the leading points of early Irish history, as set down in the sober pages of their own annalists. Forty days before the flood the Lady Caesair, granddaughter of Noah, with fifty girls and three men, came to Ireland. This is reckoned as the first "invasion" or "taking" of Ireland. Of course she and her company all perished when the flood came —all, with one doubtful exception. For some legends, with more patriotism than piety, represent Fionntan, the husband of Caesair, as actually surviving the flood. The way in which he accomplished this feat is unlike that of the ancestor of the Macleans, who weathered the flood in an ark of his own. Fionntan, when the flood began, was cast into a deep sleep, which continued for a year, and when he woke he found himself in his own house at Dun-Tulcha, in Kerry somewhere (for O'Curry has not been able exactly to localise this important event). He lived here contemporaneously with the various dynasties that ruled in Ireland down to the time of Dermot in the sixth century of our era. He then appears for the last time, "with eighteen companies of his descendants," in order to settle a boundary dispute, since he was the oldest man in the world, and must know all the facts. This story is not believed in by the more pious of the historians, for it too flagrantly contradicts the Scriptures. It, therefore, falls under O'Curry's category of "wild stories;" these are stories which contain some historic truth, but are so overloaded with the fictions of the imagination as to be nearly valueless. The Irish historians have as much horror of a blank in their history, as nature was once supposed to have of a vacuum. The Lady Caesair fills the blank before the flood; Partholan and his colony fill the first blank after the flood. He came from Migdonia, the middle of

Greece, "twenty-two years before the birth of Abraham," and was the ninth in descent from Noah, all the intermediate names being duly given. He was not in the island ten years when the Fomorians, or sea-rovers, disturbed him. These Fomorians were a constant source of trouble to all succeeding colonists, and sometimes they actually became masters of the country. Some three hundred years after their arrival, the colony of Partholan was cut off by a plague. Plagues, and eruptions of lakes and springs, fill up the gaps in the annals, when genealogies and battles are not forthcoming. For thirty years after the destruction of Partholan's colony, Ireland was waste. Then came Nemed and his sons, with their company, from "Scythia," in the year before Christ 2350. They were not long in the island when the Fomorians again appeared, and began to harass the Nemedians. Both parties were extremely skilled in Druidism, and they opposed each other in a fierce contest of spells as well as blows. The Fomorians were finally routed. Nemed was the 12th in descent from Noah. He had four sons—Starn, Jarbonnel, Fergus, and Aininn. Some two hundred and sixteen years after coming to Ireland, the Nemedians were overthrown by the Fomorians and the plague together, and only thirty escaped under the leadership of the three cousins, grandsons of Nemed, Simeon Breac, son of Starn; Beothach, son of Jarbonnel; and Britan Mael, son of Fergus. Simeon Breac and his party went to Greece, and after eleven generations returned as the Firbolgs. Beothach, with his clan, went to the northern parts of Europe, where they made themselves perfect in the arts of Divination, Druidism, and Philosophy, and returned eleven generations later as the Tuatha-de-Danann. Britan Mael, with his family, went to Mona, and from there poured their descendants into the island, which is now called Britain, after their leader, Britan Mael. The Firbolgs, the descendants of Starn, son of Nemed, being oppressed in Greece, much as the Israelites were in Egypt, returned to Ireland, and took possession of it. "They were called the Firbolgs," we are told, "from the bags of leather they used to have in Greece for carrying soil to put on the bare rocks, that they might make flowery plains under blossom of them." The Firbolgs held Ireland for thirty-six years, and then they were invaded by their 12th cousins, the Tuatha-de-Danann, the descendants of Jarbon-

nel, son of Nemid. Next to the Milesian colony yet to come, the Tuatha-de-Danann are the most important by far of the colonists, for in them we shall by-and-bye discover the Irish gods. What the annalists tell of them is briefly this. They came from the north of Europe, bringing with them "four precious jewels;" the first was the Lia Fail, the Stone of Virtue or Fate, for wherever it was, there a person of the race of Scots must reign; the sword of Luga Lamfada; the spear of the same; and the cauldron of the Dagda, from which "a company never went away unsatisfied." The Tuatha landed in Ireland on the first of May, either 1900 or 1500 years before Christ, for the chronologies differ by only a few hundred years. They burned their ships as a sign of "no retreat," and for three days concealed themselves in a mist of sorcery. They then demanded the Firbolgs to yield, which, however, they would not do, and the great battle of Moytura South was fought. The Firbolgs were routed with immense slaughter. Nuada, leader of the Tuatha-Dé in the battle, lost his hand in the fight, but Credne Cerd, the artificer, made a silver one for him, and Diancecht, the physician, fitted it on, while Miach, his son, infused feeling and motion into every joint and vein of it. For thirty years the Tuatha held undisputed possession of Erin, but the Fomorians, who were continually hovering about the coast, now made a determined effort to conquer them. The battle of Moytura North was fought between them. In it Nuada of the Silver Hand fell, and so did Balor of the Evil Eye, leader of the Fomorians. He was slain by his grandson Luga of the Long Arms, who was practically leader of the Tuatha, and who succeeded to the kingship on the death of Nuada. After a reign of forty years Luga died, and was succeeded by the Dagda Mor, the central figure of the Tuatha-de-Danann, and in the pages of our Euhemerist annalists, an inscrutable and misty personage. O'Curry ventures even to call him a demigod. The Dagda was the twenty-fourth in descent from Noah; let it be observed that Nemid was the twelfth in descent. The Firbolg chiefs also were in the twenty-fourth generation from Noah. Among the leading personages of the Tuatha were Manannan, the son of Alloid or Lir; Ogma, son of Elathan, and brother of the Dagda, surnamed "Sunface;" Goibniu, the smith; Luchtine, the carpenter; Danann, mother of their gods; Brigit, the poetess; Badb, Macha, and

Morrigan, "their three goddesses," says Keating. The Tuatha held Erin for nigh two hundred years, but when MacCuill, MacCecht, and MacGreine, who were so called "because Coll, Cecht, and Grian, the hazel, the plough, and the sun, were gods of worship to them," were ruling over Ireland with their respective queens Banba, Fodla, and Eire (three names of Ireland), the last colony of all appeared on the southern coast. These were the Milesians or Gaels from Spain and the East. They were in no respect related to the previous races, except that they were equally with them descended from Noah, Golam Miled, after whom they were called Milesians, being the twenty-fourth from Noah in direct descent. They were also called Gaels or Gaidels from an ancestor Gadelus, the seventh in descent from Noah, and son of Scota, daughter of Pharaoh. The family lived for the most part in Egypt, but Golam Miled, who was also married to a second Scota, daughter of Pharaoh, settled in Spain. The sons of Miled, to avenge a relative's murder, resolved to invade Erin. Under the leadership of Heber, Heremon, and Amergin, and accompanied by Scota, a vast army in many ships invaded Ireland. No resistance was offered at first. The Milesians arrived at Tara, and there met the three kings and queens of the Tuatha-de-Danann. The latter complained of being taken by surprise, and asked the Milesians to embark again on board their ships and allow them have a chance of opposing their landing. The Milesians assented, entered their ships, and retired for "nine waves" on the sea. On facing about again no Ireland was to be seen! The Tuatha by their sorcery had made the island as small as a pig's back, and the Milesians could therefore not see it. In addition to this they raised a violent storm on the sea, with clouds and darkness that could be felt. Many Milesian ships were lost, and the danger was brought to an end only when Amergin, who was also a Druid, pronounced a Druidic prayer, or oration, evidently addressed to the Tuatha Dé, and the storm ceased. They then landed peaceably; but they did not get the island without a few battles of a very hazy sort, indeed. It probably at first was intended to be shown that the Tuatha allowed them to land, and themselves retired to the Land of Promise—the country of the *Side*—where they still took an interest in mortal affairs, and often afterwards appeared in Irish history and tales. The Milesians, or

Gadelians or Gaels, are a purely mortal race; they were, in fact, the dominant race of Ireland in historic times. Their history and full genealogies from some thirteen hundred years before Christ till the introduction of Christianity, are gravely told in the Annals of the Four Masters and Keating's Ireland; every king has his pedigree given, and many are the details that are recorded of their doings in war and in peace, in society, and in the chase, in law, and in the care and seizure of land and of cattle. Mythic persons constantly flit across the page; the demigods become mere mortal chiefs, and the "last reflections" of the sun-god appear in the features of Cuchulainn and Finn.

There are many interpretations put upon the history that we have just summarily given. Naturally enough, ethnological theories form the greater part of such explanations. The leading invasions of the Firbolgs, Fomorians, Tuatha-de-Danann and Milesians, are made use of to refute or support some favourite theory about the various races that go to compose the Irish nation. Two hundred years ago an Irish genealogist, of the name of Dubaltach MacFirbisigh, advanced the theory, doubtless supported by tradition, that "every one who is white-skinned, brown-haired, bountiful in the bestowal on the bards of jewels, wealth, and rings, not afraid of battle or combat, is of the Clanna-Miled (the Milesians); every one who is fair-haired, big, vindictive, skilled in music, druidry, and magic, all these are of the Tuatha-de-Danann; while the black-haired, loud-tongued, mischievous, tale-bearing, inhospitable churls, the disturbers of assemblies, who love not music and entertainment, these are of the Feru-bolg and the other conquered peoples." Skene, in modern times, gives this theory of MacFirbisigh in our modern terms: the Firbolgs belong to the Iberian or Neolithic and pre-Celtic tribes; the Celts themselves are divided into Gaels and Britons; the Gaelic branch is again subdivided into (1) a fair-skinned, large-limbed, and red-haired race—the Picts of Caledonia and the Tuatha-de-Danann of Ireland; and (2), a fair-skinned, brown-haired race, "of a less Germanic type," represented in Ireland by the Milesians, and in Scotland by the band of invading Scots. We have already presented the best modern scientific views on the ethnology of these islands; there would appear to have been three races—(1), A primitive, small, dark, long-headed race, of the Basque type in

language and Iberian in physique; (2), a fair, tall, rough-featured, round-headed, and rough-limbed race, also pre-Celtic, which we called the Finnish; and (3), the Celts, fair, straight-featured, long-headed and tall, and belonging to the Aryan family. We might equate the Firbolgs with the dark Iberian race; the Tuatha-de-Danann with the Finnish race; and the Milesians with the Celts. The legendary and traditional account can easily be fitted into the present scientific view of the subject. But, after all, the truth of such a theory must be gravely doubted; even its agreement with proper scientific methods sin such case must be questioned. We may grant that the strong contrast between a small dark race and a tall fair race might give rise to a myth like that of the Firbolgs and Tuatha-de-Dananns. But in Wales, where the contrast is even stronger, no such myth exists. Again, the Milesians were really fair-haired and not brown-haired; the heroes of Ulster are all fair or yellow-haired, and so are the Feni. It is best, therefore, to adopt a purely mythological explanation of the matter. Despite its pseudo-historical character, the whole history of the invasions of the Firbolg, De-Dananns, and Fomorians appears to be a Gaelic counterpart of what we see in Greek mythology, the war of the rough and untamed powers of earth, sea, and fire, against the orderly cosmos of the Olympians; the war, in short, of the giants and Titans against Zeus and his brothers. The Firbolgs may be, therefore, looked upon as the earth-powers; too much stress need not be laid on the fact that they and their brethren, the Fir-Domnans, were wont to dig the soil, make pits, and carry earth in bags to make flowery plains of bare rocks; but it should be noticed that they always meet the Tuatha-de-Danann as natives of the soil repelling invaders. The gods of the soil often belong to a pre-Aryan people, while the greater gods, the Olympians and the Tuatha-de-Danann, are intrusive, the divinities of the new-comers into the land, the patrons of warriors and sea-faring men. Behind these last there often stand deities of older birth, those who had been worshipped in ancient days by the simple and settled folk of the land. Such were Pan or Hermes of Arcadia, Dionysus of Thrace, and Demeter and Dione. The Firbolgs may, therefore, be looked on as either the homely gods of preceding tribes of the non-Aryan races, or as answering to the

giants and Titans of kindred Aryan races. "The King of the Feru-Bolg," says Mr Fitzgerald, "Eothaile—whom we shall find reason to suspect to be a fire-giant—fled from the field when the day was lost, 'in search of water to allay his burning thirst,' and by the water of the sea he fell on Traigh-Eothaile, 'Eothaile's Strand,' in Sligo. His great cairn, still standing, on this strand was one of the wonders of Ireland, and though not apparently elevated, *the water could never cover it.*" If we turn to the Fomorians, we shall find quite as easy an explanation. The meaning of the word is "Sea-rover;" it has always been derived from the words "fo," under, and "muir," sea, and the meaning usually attached to the combination has been "those that rove on the sea." The Fomorians are, therefore, sea-powers: the rough, chaotic power of the Atlantic Ocean. They meet the Tuatha-de-Dannan in the extreme West of Ireland, on the last day of summer, that is, November eve: the fierce ocean powers meet the orderly heaven and air gods on the Atlantic borders when winter is coming on, and the latter do not allow the former to overwhelm the country. Balor of the Evil Eye, whose glance can turn his opponents into stone, and who, in some forms of the legend, is represented as having only one eye, is very suggestive of Polyphemus, the giant son of the Grecian ocean god. To this we may compare the Gaelic tale of the Muireartach, where the Atlantic Sea is represented as a "toothy carlin," with an eye in the middle of her forehead. The Tuatha-de-Dananns will, therefore, be simply the gods that beneficially direct the powers of sky, air, sea, and earth; they will correspond exactly to Zeus, Poseidon, Pluto, and the rest of the Grecian god-world, who benignly rule over the heavens, the sea, and the shades. The Milesians will accordingly be merely the main body of the Gaelic people, whose gods the Tuatha-de-Danann are. Why there is no more open acknowledgment of the Tuatha-de-Danann as the pagan gods of the Gael may easily be accounted for. The accounts we have are long posterior to the introduction of Christianity; and it was a principle of the early Christian Church to assimilate to itself, following the true Roman fashion, all native religions. The native gods were made saints (especially the female divinities, such as Brigit), fairies, demons, and kings. Christianity was about five hundred years

established before we have any native record of events; the further back we go the nearer do the Tuatha-Dé come to be gods. Even in the 8th century an Irish monk could still invoke Goibniu and Diancecht, the Tuatha gods answering to Vulcan and Arsculapius, for relief from, and protection against, pain.

## Gods of the Gaels.

Whatever interpretation we give to the Feru-bolg and the Fomorians, there can be little question as to the fact that the Tuatha-De-Danann are the Gaelic gods. The Irish historians, as we saw, represent them as kings with subjects, but even they find it difficult to hide the fact that some of these kings and queens afterwards appear on the scene of history in a supernatural fashion. The myths and tales, however, make no scruple to tell us that the Tuatha-De-Danann still live in Fairyland, and often take part in human affairs. In a very ancient tract which records a dialogue between St Patrick and Caoilte Mac Ronain, they are spoken of as "sprites or fairies, with corporeal and material forms, but induced with immortality." Their skill in magic, shown in their manipulation of storms, clouds, and darkness, is insisted on in all the myths, and is a source of trouble to the historians and annalists, who regard them as mere mortals. "They were called gods," says Keating, "from the wonderfulness of their deeds of sorcery." To them is first applied the term *Side*, which in modern Gaelic means "fairy," but which in the case of the Tuatha-De-Danann has a much wider signification, for it implies a sort of god-like existence in the "Land of Promise." The Book of Armagh calls the *Side* "deos terrenos," earthly gods, whom, we are told in Fiacc's hymn, when Patrick came, the peoples adored—"tuatha adortais *Side*." *Sid* was a term applied to the green knolls where some of these deified mortals were supposed to dwell: the word appears in the modern Gaelic *sith* and *sithean*, a mound or rather a fairy mound. The Tuatha-De-Danann were also called "Aes Side," *aes* being here used in the sense of "race" and not of "age." We may remark that the Norse gods were also known as the Aes or Aesir, one of the many remarkable coincidences in words and in actions between the Irish gods and the deities of Asgard.

In attempting to reconstruct the Gaelic god-world from the al-

most hopeless ruins in which piety and time have laid it, we must not merely remember tl.e Aryan character of it, but also Cæsar's brief account of the Gaulish Olympus. There can be little doubt but that the Gaelic and Gaulish Olympi were similar in outline, and probably also in details. We shall, therefore, expect Mercury to be the most important of the Gaelic deities, while Apollo, Mars, Jupiter, and Minerva take rank after him. These deities and others, as was pointed out, represent the personified powers of nature—the wind, the sun, the storm, the sky, and the moon. Not only are these elements personified as deities and so worshipped, but we also find the elements in their impersonified state, as it were, invoked for aid and for good faith. The classical examples of this are extremely numerous. One instance will suffice: In Virgil, Æneas and Latinus are represented as swearing by the sun, the earth, the sea, the stars, by the Almighty Father and his Spouse, by Mars and Janus, by the spring and rivers, the ether and the deities of the sea. The first instance of such an oath in Irish history is when Breas, the Fomorian, swore by "the sun and the moon, by the sea and the land, and by all the elements, to fulfil the engagement" which Luga imposed on him. Vows to the heavens and the earth, to day and night, to the rain, the dew and the wind, are exceedingly common, appearing even in historic times both in Ireland and Scotland ; among the Picts and Scots in the 4th century, in Ireland in the 5th, as when Loegaire was made to swear by the elements that he would never again demand the cow-tribute, and with M'Conglinne in the 8th century. It is said that Loegaire forgot his oath, and thus met with an evil end, for "it was the sun and the wind that wrought his death, because he had violated their sanctity;" so say the Four Masters, good Christians though they were! The divine elements are known in Gaelic as *duli*, and one of the oldest and most favourite epithets of the Deity is "rig na n-dul," the King of the Elements, to which may be compared "Dia nan dul" of the Gaelic Psalms: the word for Creator in old Gaelic is *Dulem*, the genitive of which is *Duleman*.

Our description of the Gaelic gods will naturally begin with the Jupiter of the Gaels. This honour belongs most probably to the Dagda, "in Dagda mor," "the great good one" (?) as Mr Fitzgerald explains his name. Some interpret the name as the

"good fire." In any case, *dag* signifies "good," appearing in modern Gaelic as *deagh*, but what *da* means is yet undecided. Though the Dagda is very often mentioned, yet little information is given about him. He was one of the leaders of the Tuatha-De-Danann from Scythia to Ireland, and he brought with him from "Murias" a magical cauldron capable of satisfying the hunger of everyone. He is the most renowed of all the Tuatha for his skill in Druidism. With Luga he makes and carries out all the arrangements of the second battle of Moytura, in which, however, he was wounded with a poisoned weapon by the amazon queen Cethlenn. The venom of that wound caused his death 120 years later. For eighty years previous to his death, he ruled the Tuatha as king. There is little in these meagre details to help us to a true notion of the character of the Dagda. It is in the epithets attached to his name, and the incidental references to him, scattered through many tales, that we can hope to understand his position among the gods. He is called Eochaidh Ollathair, that is, Chevalier All-father, and, further, Ruadrofhessa, "the red one of all knowledge." The epithet "Ollathair"—All-father—puts him on a level with Jupiter, Zeus, and Odin; he is the father of gods and men, king of heaven and earth. Zeus, we know, is the sky-god, the beneficent power of light and life, who regulates the atmosphere and its phenomena—notably, the thunder—for the good of men: Odin is, however, a wind-god more than a sky-god, answering rather to the Roman Mercury and the Greek Hermes than to Jove and Zeus. Is the Dagda a wind-god or a light-god or a fire-god? Mr Fitzgerald classes him with Odin as a sky- and wind-god, and appeals to the epithet "Eochaid"—horseman—as confirmation; for horseman and huntsman are nearly allied, and seem rather to belong to the wind deity, as in the case of Odin they do so apply. Mr Elton makes the Dagda a spirit of heat who ruled all fires in earth and heaven, for he interprets the name after O'Donovan as signifying "the great good fire." The view which we will adopt on the matter differs from both the foregoing. The Dagda represents rather the sky-god, exactly the Roman Jove. He is the All-father; he is the Red-one—the sky in certain states being so, just as at other times he is said to be "greyer than the grey mist"—who is all-wise; he is the Dag-da, the good-

father or good-one, the deus optimus maximus, the benign providence, who arranges, provides, and superintends everything. His cauldron is interpreted by some as the canopy of heaven; like the thunder-god, Thor, he possessed a hand-stone which returned of itself to the place from which it was thrown, just as Thor's hammer—the thunder-bolt—did.

The most important deity in the Gaelic pantheon must have been Mercury: which of the Tuatha-De-Danann was he? The honour of being the god most worshipped by the Gael must fall to Manannan, the son of Lir, whose attributes we have already discussed. Manannan is always a deity; he is never a mortal hero like the others. We represented him as god of sea and wind, as opposed to Mr Elton's view, who made him a sun-god. There is little doubt but Manannan is a wind-god: he possesses all the prominent requisites of such a deity. He is the owner of the wonderful steed, Enbarr, of the flowing mane, who is swift as the cold clear wind of spring; his also is the sword, Freeart, the answerer, from whose wound there was no recovery; and he possessed the curious mantle that will cause people never to meet again. The three characteristic possessions of Odin are his sword, his mantle, and his horse Sleipnir. The sword is the lightning; the mantle is the air and clouds, and the grey horse Sleipnir is the rushing grey cloud driven by the wind. Odin is, as already said, mostly a wind-god; so, too, is Manannan. Both deities, however, usurped features belonging to more departmental gods, in proportion as they took the first place in the worship of the people. Manannan also possessed the wonderful canoe which could hold any number of people, suiting its size to them, and which obeyed the will of those it bore, and swept over the ocean as fast as the March wind. He, too, instituted the "Feast of Age," known as the feast of Gobnenn the smith. Whoever was present at it, and partook of the food and drink, was free ever after from sickness, decay, and old age. The Land of Promise is often identified with *Inis-Mhanann*, or Isle of Man, which was ruled over by Manannan, but his connection with the land of promise is rather more like that of Mercury with the land of shades; he would appear to have been the psychopomp—the conductor of the shades of men to the happy Isles of the West. He was, as we saw, god of merchandise and also god of arts for

he is represented as teaching Diarmat in all the arts when he was with him in Fairyland. Why the Celts and Teutons made the wind deity their chief god is fairly clear. The atmospheric conditions of Western and Northern Europe make the wind and storm powers of comparatively more importance than they are in sunnier lands, where the gods of light on the other hand are supreme. Manannan is further very properly denominated the "son of Lir," the son of the sea, for sure enough where else does the wind come from in these islands of ours but from the sea?

There is little trouble in settling the identity of the Gaelic Apollo. This is Luga Lamfada, surnamed the Ildana; Luga of the Long Arms, the many-arted one. He appears with a stately band of warriors on white steeds, "a young champion, tall and comely, with a countenance as bright and glorious as the setting sun." But more definite still is the reference to his *sunlike* countenance; in another place the Fomorian champion, Breas, is made to say in reference to the approach of Luga from the west: "A wonderful thing has come to pass to-day; for the sun, it seems to me, has risen in the west." "It would be better that it were so," said the Druids. "The light you see is the brightness of the face and the flashing of the weapons of Luga of the Long Arms, our deadly enemy." He also possessed the swiftness and keenness of the ocean-wind-god Manannan, for we are told that he rode Manannan's mare Enbarr of the flowing mane, that is, the driving wind; his coat of mail—the clouds; and he is further represented as having Manannan's sword, the lightning flash. But this last is doubtful, for two of the precious jewels that the Tuatha-De-Danann took from the east are Luga's sword and his spear "Gae Buaifneach," tempered in the poisoned blood of adders. These weapons are merely the flashing rays of the sun, just as Luga's helmet, Cannbarr, glittered with dazzling brightness, with two precious stones set in it, one in front and one behind. Whenever he took off the helmet, we are told that his "face shone like the sun on a dry summer day." His deeds are also "sunlike" in their character. He first frees the Tuatha from the hated tribute which was imposed on them after a temporary success on the part of the Fomorians. We are told that he put a Druidical spell on the plundered cattle, and sent all the milch cows home to their owners, leaving the dry cows to cumber his

enemies. The cows of the sun-god are famous in all mythologies; they are the clouds of heaven that bring rain and moisture to men, when shone upon by the rays of the sun. Luga's greatest feat is the overthrow of the Fomorians at Moytura. For years he had been preparing for this great fight. He summoned all the artists and artificers of renown and got arms in readiness. He himself lent his help to each tradesman, for he was a skilled carpenter, mason, smith, harper, druid, physician, cup-bearer, and goldsmith, "one who embodied in himself all these arts and professions," as he described himself on one occasion. When the sons of Turenn slew his father, he made them procure for him as "eric" or fine, several weapons of importance and several salves, with a view to using them in the great struggle against the stormy ocean powers. Such were the apples of Hisberna, which could cure any sickness and would return to the owner even when thrown away; the pig's skin whose touch made whole; the spear—"the slaughterer"—whose fiery blazing head was always kept in water; the steeds and chariot of Dobar—the steeds which travel with equal ease on land and sea; the pigs of Asal—"whosoever eats a part of them shall not suffer from ill health"—even when killed to-day they are alive to-morrow; and the hound-whelp Failinis, that shines like the sun on summer day—before him every wild beast falls to earth powerless. In the battle of Moytura, he killed Balor of the Evil Eye. That worthy had already turned Nuada of the Silver Hand into stone, and many more De-Danann, and just as he was opening it on Luga, the latter flung a "sling stone" at it, which passed through it and Balor's brain. Now Balor was his grandfather, and it had been foretold that he should be slain by his grandson. In view of this he kept his only child, a daughter, Aethlenn, secluded in a tower, where man and the idea of "man" were to be strictly excluded. But in vain. She became the wife of Cian, the son of Diancecht, the physician, and Luga was the offspring. We must note his connection with the god of healing; that god is his grandfather. In Greek mythology, Aesculapius is the son of Apollo. The name Luga, too, is suggestive; it is doubtless from the root *luc*, to shine, and it is interesting to observe that the Norse fire-god, also master of many arts, though evil arts, is called Loki. The epithet *Lamfada*,

long arms, reminds us of the far-darter Apollo, and refers to the long-shooting rays of the sun—a most appropriate epithet.

Cormac informs us in his Glossary that Neith was the god of battle among the pagan Gael, and that Nemon was his wife, information which is repeated in other and later manuscripts with some variations and additions. We are vouchsafed no further information as to Neith's character or actions; only he appears in some of the inevitable pedigrees, and we are told that Neit, son of Indu, and his two wives, Badb and Nemain, were slain at Ailech by "Neptur (!) of the Fomorians." With Nemain may be compared the British war goddess Nemetona, whose name appears on an inscription along with that of Mars Lucetius. There would appear to have been more than one war goddess; the names Badb, Nemain, Macha, and Morrigan, constantly recur as those of war deities and demons. Badb signifies a scald-crow, and may be the generic name of the war goddess rather than a proper name. The crow and the raven are constantly connected in the Northern Mythologies with battle-deities. "How is it with you, Ravens?" says the Norse "Raven-Song," "whence are you come with gory beak at the dawning of the day. There is flesh cleaving to your talons, and a scent of carrion comes from your mouth. You lodged last night I ween near where ye knew the corses were lying." The greedy hawks of Odin scent the slain from afar. The ravens also protect and assist heroes, both in Irish and Norse myth. It was a lucky sign if a raven followed a warrior. Of Macha, the third goddess mentioned, little need be said; she appears afterwards as a queen of Ireland, under the title of Macha Mongruad, or Macha Red-Mane. The goddess Morrigan was also a war deity to all appearance. The name signifies "great queen," and may be, like Badb, a generic name. She is represented as first resisting and afterwards assisting the hero Cuchulainn, appearing to him in various forms. O'Curry makes her the wife of the Dagda, and she is often equated with the goddess Ana. The name is doubtless the same as that of Morgan le Fay, the fairy queen and Arthur's sister. It may be remarked that Morgan le Fay is also wife of Urian Rheged, who and his son Owen, with the army of ravens, are clearly war deities.

The goddess Ana or Aine (gen. Anann) has been called the queen of heaven, and connected with the worship of the moon.

Cormac describes her as "mater deorum Hibernensium"—mother of the Irish gods. "Well she used to nourish the gods," he adds, and in another place he says, "As Ana was mother of the gods, so Buanann was mother of the Fiann (heroes)." Camden found in his time survival of moon-worship. "When they see the moon first after the change," he says, "commonly they bow the knee and say the Lord's Prayer, and then, with a loud voice, they speak to the moon, thus—'Leave us whole and sound as thou hast found us.'" Keating gives the name of this goddess as Danann, and explains the Tuatha-De-Danann as the worshippers of the gods of Danann, the gods of Danann being, according to him, Brian, Iucharba, and Iuchar. These three gods are known in other myths as the "children of Turenn," slain, as Keating himself says, by Luga Lamfada. The goddess Buanann, mentioned in connection with Ana or Anann, appears in the story of the great Druid Mogh Ruith as his patron, to whose *Sid* he fares to consult her in his difficulties.

Minerva is the fifth and last deity mentioned by Cæsar as worshipped by the Gauls—their goddess of arts and industry. A passage in Solinus, and another in Giraldus Cambrensis, enable us to decide, with absolute certainty, what goddess answered among the Gaels to the position of Minerva. Solinus (first century A.D.) says that in Britain, Minerva presides over the hot springs, and that in her temple there flamed a perpetual fire, which never whitened into ashes, but hardened into a strong mass. Giraldus (12th century A.D.) informs us that at the shrine of St Brigit at Kildare, the fire is allowed never to go out, and though such heaps of wood have been consumed since the time of the Virgin, yet there has been no accumulation of ashes. "Each of her nineteen nuns has the care of the fire for a single night in turn, and on the evening before the twentieth night, the last nun, having heaped wood upon the fire, says, 'Brigit, take charge of your own fire, for this night belongs to you.' She then leaves the fire, and in the morning it is found that the fire has not gone out, and that the usual quantity of fuel has been used." This sacred fire was kept burning continually for centuries, and was finally extinguished, only with the extinction of the monasteries by Henry VIII. Brigit, therefore, is the Gaelic Minerva. She is goddess of the household fire; her position is that of the hearth

goddess Vesta, as much as that of Minerva, for evidently she is primarily a fire-goddess. Her name is probably from the same root as the English *bright*, Gaelic *breo*. The British goddess, Brigantia, is doubtless the same as the Irish Brigit. Mr Whitley Stokes picks out the following instances in proof of her character as a fire-goddess; she was born at sunrise; her breath revives the dead; a house in which she stays flames up to heaven; she is fed with the milk of a white red-eared cow; a fiery pillar rises from her head, and she remains a virgin like the Roman goddess, Vesta, and her virgins—Vesta, whom Ovid tells us to consider "nothing else than the living flame, which can produce no bodies." Cormac calls her the daughter of the Dagda. "This Brigit," he says, "is a poetess, a goddess whom poets worshipped. Her sisters were Brigit, woman of healing; Brigit, woman of smith work; that is, goddesses; these are the three daughters of the Dagda." Doubtless these three daughters, thus distinguished by Cormac, are one and the same person. Brigit, therefore, was goddess of fire, the hearth and the home.

The rest of the Gaelic pantheon may be dismissed in a few sentences. Angus Mac-ind-oc, "the only choice one, son of Youth or Perfection," has been well called the Eros—the Cupid—of the Gael. "He was represented with a harp, and attended by bright birds, his own transformed kisses, at whose singing love arose in the hearts of youths and maidens." He is the son of the Dagda, and he lives at the Brugh of the Boyne; in one weird tale he is represented as the son of the Boyne. He is the patron god of Diarmat, whom he helps in escaping from the wrath of Finn, when Diarmat eloped with Grainne. The River Boyne is also connected with the ocean-god Nuada; it was called the wrist of Nuada's wife. The literary deity was Ogma, brother of the Dagda, surnamed "Sun-face"; he invented the alphabet known as the Ogam alphabet, and, as was pointed out already, he is mentioned by Lucian as the Gaulish god of eloquence. Three artisan gods are mentioned: Goibniu, the smith, invoked in the St Gall Incantations of the 8th century; Creidne Cerd, the goldsmith; and Luchtine, the carpenter. These three made the Tuatha arms; when the smith finished a spear-head, he threw it from his tongs towards the door-post, in which it stuck by the point; the carpenter had the handle ready, and threw it accurately into the socket;

and Creidne Cerd pitched the nails from his tongs into the holes in the socket of the spear. Thus was the spear finished in less time than we can describe the process. Diancecht was the physician of the gods; at Moytura battle he prepared a medical bath, into which he plunged the wounded, and they instantly came out whole again, and returned to the fight. The three De-Danann queens, Eire, Fodhla, and Banbha, gave their names to Ireland, but the first is the one which is usually recognised. It may be observed that these names, and those of some others of the gods are scattered widely over the topography both of Ireland and Scotland. In the latter country we meet with Eire, and its genitive Erenn in river and district names; Fodla forms part of Athole, Ath-Fodhla, probably; Banba appears in Banff; Angus the Beautiful gave his name to Angus; Manannan's name appears in the Isle of Man, and as the old name of the district at the mouth of the Forth, still seen in Clack-Mannan.

## The Celtic Elysium.

All the Aryan nations originally believed in the existence, after death, of the human soul. This belief had its root in the "animism" of a more barbaric period of their existence, and held its place in the remnants of ancestral worship we meet with in Rome and Greece, and in the many myths bearing on the land of shades. Evidently, too, the pre-Aryan tribes of Europe were strong believers in the future existence of man's second self, his soul. Their barrows, dolmens, and stone-circles point distinctly to their reverence for the dead, and their belief in their continued existence in another sphere of nature, from which they visited, helped and admonished their living representatives. Ancestor worship clearly was their main creed. Hence the vividness of the belief of the early Northern Aryans—Celts and Teutons—in future existence, and their clinging to ancestor worship so long, may arise from their mingling with a people who was in that stage of belief; whereas, at the dawn of our era, in Greece and Rome, the whole doctrine of a future state belonged to the region of languid half-belief. The aristocracy and the philosophers entirely disbelieved it. Cæsar, as supreme pontiff of Rome, declared, in his place in the senate, his utter disbelief in another life, and the stern Cato but mildly replied that their ancestors, men, perhaps, as

wise as Cæsar, believed that the guilty, after death, were sent to noisome abodes, full of all horrors and terrors. But the classical belief, even at its best—in the poems of Homer—gives but a poor, shadowy, comfortless existence to the spirits of the dead. They lived in Hades, a country which comprised various districts of woe, and of bliss such as it was. The ghost of Achilles says to Ulysses :—" Rather would I live on earth as a poor man's hireling, than reign among all the dead." The gods lived on the heights of Olympus, aloft in heaven, and far apart from the hated abode of the dead, which lay under the earth and ocean. Mortals were all consigned to the grisly realm of Pluto; even the demi-god Hercules, though living in Olympus, had his ghostly mortal counterpart in Hades. Among the Romans, ancestor worship had a stronger force than in Greece; their feast of the dead was duly celebrated in the latter half of February, when chaplets were laid on their tombs, and fruit, salt, corn soaked in wine, and violets, were the least costly offerings presented to them. The deification of the Emperors was merely a further development of this ancestor worship. The remembrance of the festival of the dead is still kept up in the Roman calendar as the feast of All Souls. The Celts of Brittany preserve still the remembrance of the ancestor worship on this day; they put cakes and sweet meats on the graves, and at night make up the fire and leave the fragments of the supper on the table, for the souls of the dead of the family who will come to visit their home.

The Celts would appear to have had a much more vivid belief in future existence than either the Greeks or the Romans. We may pass over the Druidic doctrine of transmigration; it was doubtless not the popular view of future life. We know as much from some side references in one or two classical writers. So realistic was the Celtic belief in existence after death that money loans were granted on the understanding that they were to be repaid beyond the grave! Valerius Maximus laughs at the Gauls for "lending money which should be paid the creditor in the other world, for they believed that the soul was immortal." Mela tells us one of the Druidic doctrines that was publicly preached and nationally believed in, namely, that the soul was eternal and that there was another life in the land of shades. "Accordingly," he adds, "they burn and bury along with the dead

whatever was once useful to them when alive. Business accounts and debt claims used to be transferred to the next world, and some even willingly cast themselves on the funeral piles of their relatives under the impression that they would live with them hereafter." Diodorus Siculus informs us that at the funeral of their dead some threw letters addressed to their defunct relatives on the funeral pyre, under the belief that the dead would read them. This intense belief in the reality of future existence must have removed the Celtic other-world from the unreal and shadowy Hades of Greece and Rome. What the exact character of this other world was among the Gauls we cannot well say; but the later legends in France, Wales, and Ireland go to prove that it partook of the nature of an Earthly Paradise, situated in some happy isle of the West. The pseudo-Plutarch introduces a grammarian Demetrius as returned from Britain, and saying "that there are many desert islands scattered round Britain, some of which have the names of being the islands of genii and heroes. The island which lay nearest the desert isles had but few inhabitants, and these were esteemed by the Britons sacred and inviolable. Very soon after his arrival there was great turbulence in the air and portentous storms. The islanders said when these ceased that some one of the superior genii had departed, whose extinction excited the winds and storms. And there was one island where Saturn was kept by Briareus in a deep sleep, attended by many genii as his companions." The poet Claudian evidently records a Gaulish belief in the Island of Souls in the lines:—

> "Est locus extremum pandit quâ Gallia litus,
> Oceani praetentus aquis, ubi fertur Ulixes
> Sanguine libato populum movisse silentem.
> Illic umbrarum tenui stridore volantum
> Felebilis auditur questus. Simulacra coloni
> Pallida defunctasque vident migrare figuras."

Beyond the westernmost point of the Gallic shore, he says, is the place where Ulysses summoned the shades (as Homer has it.) There are heard the tearful cries of fleeting ghosts; the natives see their pallid forms and ghostly figures moving on to their last abode. The traditions of Brittany, with true Celtic tenacity, still bear traces of this belief; at the furthest extremity of that district, where Cape Raz juts into the Western Sea, lies the Bay of

Souls, where departed spirits sail off across the sea in ghostly ships to the happy isles. Procopius, in the 6th century, enables us to understand what the peasants of Northern Gaul believed in regard to the Happy Isles, and to Britain in particular. He confuses Britain with a fabulous island called Brittia, one half of which is habitable; but the other half, divided off by a wall, is set apart to be the home of ghosts. The fishermen on the continent opposite to Brittia performed the functions of ferrymen for the dead. "At night they perceive the door to be shaken, and they hear a certain indistinct voice summoning them to their work. They proceed to the shore under compulsion of a necessity they cannot understand. Here they perceive vessels—not their own—apparently without passengers. Embarking, they take the oars, and feel as if they had a burden on board in the shape of unseen passengers, which sometimes sinks the boat to within a finger-breadth of the water. They see no one. After rowing for an hour, they reach Brittia, really a mortal journey of over twenty-four hours. Arrived at Brittia, they hear the names of their passengers and their dignities called over and answered; and on the ghosts all landing, they are wafted back to the habitable world."

So far we have discovered among the early Celts an intense conviction in a personal existence in another world, where they "married and gave in marriage," and into which business transactions of this world might be transferred. Its locality was to the west—an island in the land of the setting sun, or possibly a country under the western waves, for the traditions of Brittany, Cornwall, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland continually insist on the existence of such a land. Buried cities are recorded as existing to the westward of every prominent Celtic cape; that sunken district of Lyonesse which appears in all Brythonic traditions. The very earthly character of the Celtic world of the departed is seen in the surviving remembrances of it still existent, despite all the Church's efforts, in the mythic tales; an Earthly Paradise it truly was. We do not find much in Welsh myth bearing on the matter; it is in Irish and Gaelic tales that we have the material for judging of the character of the Celtic Elysium.

## Welsh and Gaelic Elysium.

The Welsh Hades was known as Annwn. It possessed kings,

chiefs, and commons, somewhat like those of this world, only vastly superior—"the comeliest and best equipped people ever seen." Pwyll, Prince of Dyved (South-west Wales), while one day out hunting, lost his companions in his eager pursuit of a stag. Hearing a cry of hounds near him, he approached, and saw the stag brought down by other dogs than his own. "Then he looked at the colour of the dogs, staying not to look at the stag, and of all the hounds that he had seen in the world, he had never seen any that were like unto these. For their hair was of a brilliant shining white, and their ears were red; and as the whiteness of their bodies shone, so did the redness of their ears glisten." He drove them from the stag, and set on it his own dogs. Immediately there came upon him a man dressed all in grey and mounted on a grey horse, and he reviled Pwyll for his discourtesy in turning off his hounds. Pwyll offered to make reparation, and his offer was accepted. The stranger said that he was Arawn, King of one-half of Annwn, and he was at war with Havgan, the other King. Pwyll, if he liked, could overthrow Havgan, who was to come exactly a year thereafter against Arawn. Would Pwyll change places with him and meet Havgan? He would give him his own personal appearance, and assume Pwyll's, and they could govern each other's kingdoms for a year. This was agreed on. Pywll took the form of Arawn, and came to Annwn. He never saw anything like the beauty of Arawn's city and the appointments of his court, "which of all the courts on earth was the best supplied with food and drink, and vessels of gold and royal jewels." Suffice it to say that he ruled well during the year, and at the end of it slew Havgan, "at the ford," in single combat, and thus made Arawn undisputed master of Hades. Arawn had, meanwhile, conducted the kingdom of Dyved as it never had been before; his wisdom and justice were unsurpassable. And these two kings made an eternal bond of friendship with each other, and Pywll was called "Chief of Annwn" henceforward.

The dogs of Annwn, mentioned in the above tale, are a common feature in mythology. Ossian, on his way to Tir-nan-og, saw a hornless fawn bounding nimbly along the wave-crests pursued by a white hound with red ears. The Wild Huntsman and his dogs of Teutonic myth belong to the same category; and these dogs of Annwn were similarly said to rush through the air,

and evil was the omen. These are, undoubtedly, the wind-dogs of Hermes, the conductor of souls; the Wild Huntsman is none other than Odin, sweeping up the souls of the dead in his path. Annwn, or the Lower Regions, possess, in the myth, the same characteristics as this world; only things are on a grander scale there altogether. The other reference of importance to this Earthly Other-world is in the story of Arthur. Dying on the battle-field of Camlan, he is carried away to heal of his wounds to "the vale of Avilion," which Tennyson, catching the true idea of the Welsh mythic paradise, describes thus: Arthur, dying, speaks to Bedivere;

> "I am going a long way—
> To the island-valley of Avilion;
> Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
> And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea."

And here Arthur still lives on, destined one day to appear and set free his Cambrians from the hateful yoke of the Saxon.

The myths in Ireland bearing on the existence of a happy western land are very numerous and important. The names given to this land vary, but they have a general reference to happiness, all save the name Tir-fa-tonn, the 'Under-wave Land." The names generally met with are Tir Tairngire, "Land of Promise"; Mag Mell, "Plains of Happiness"; Tir-nam-beo, "Land of the Living"; Tir-nan-og, "Land of the Young"; and O'Breasail, "Breasal's Isle." Whether there is any distinction implied in these names cannot well be said. There would seem to be something of a difference between the Under-wave Land and the Plains of Happiness; the latter may have rather been the abode of the gods, where Manannan lived with Fann his wife, as the myths have it. Tir-fa-tonn looks rather like the Gaelic Hades, the abode of the dead. The Gaelic version of Diarmat's sojourn there gives strong colour to such a supposition, and the early Middle Age legends in regard to St Patrick's Purgatory below Lough Dearg—the precursors of Dante and Milton's descriptions—lend great countenance to such a distinction between Tir-fa-tonn and Mag Mell.

The myths may be grouped in three divisions. There are, first, the myths where a mortal is summoned, in an enchanting

song, by a fairy being who has fallen in love with the mortal, to a land of beauty and happiness and ever-youthful life; second, there are myths which tell how a hero has, Ulysses-like, paid a business visit to the other world; and, thirdly, the accounts of many voyages of discovery in search of the Happy Isles, and the "Traveller's Tales" of the wonders seen. To the first class belong three very remarkable Irish myths: the Courtship of Etain, the Story of Condla Cam, and Ossian in Tir-nan-og The outline of the story is as follows:—There suddenly appears before a kingly company a fairy being who chants, for some particular person in the company loved by the fairy, a song descriptive of the glories and pleasures of the Land of the Ever-young., The person so addressed cannot choose but love the fairy, and go to the wonderful land. In Ossian's case alone have we got an account of the career of the enchanted one in Tir-nan-og. Niam of the Golden Hair suddenly presents herself before the Feni, tells her love for Ossian, and says: "I place you under obligations which no true heroes break through—to come with me on my white steed to Tir-nan-og, the most delightful and renowned country under the sun. Jewels and gold there are in abundance, and honey and wine; the trees bear fruit and blossoms and green leaves all the year round. Feasting and music and harmless pastimes are there each day. You will get a hundred swords, and robes of richest loom; a hundred steeds, and hounds of keenest scent; numberless herds, and sheep with fleeces of gold; a hundred maidens merry and young, sweeter of mouth than the music of birds; a hundred suits of armour, and a sword, gold handled, that never missed a stroke. Decline shall not come on you, nor death, nor decay. These, and much more that passeth all mention, shall be yours, and myself as your wife!" Needless is it to recount how Ossian went, the wonders he saw by the way, and the feats he did; how he found Tir-nan-og all that it was painted by the Princess Niam; how, after three hundred years, he returned to earth on the white steed, from whose back he was forbidden to dismount; how he fell from the steed when helping the poor weakly mortals that he found then on earth to raise a huge stone; and how the steed rushed off and left him, old and withered and blind, "among little men."

Visits of the nature of that undertaken by Ulysses, in

Homer, to the Land of Shades, were made by at least three great champions of the Gael. These are Cuchulainn, Cormac Mac Art, and Diarmat O' Duinn. We have already referred to Cuchulainn's helping of Fand, wife of Manannan. The story says that, like a wise man, Cuchulainn, when invited to assist Fand, deserted as she was by her husband, sent his charioteer Loeg to "prospect" and report as to the safety of such a journey. Loeg and his fairy guide "proceeded until they reached the side of the island, when they saw the bronze skiff waiting for them. They then stepped on to the ship and landed on the island." There they found Fand and her father waiting them. Professor Rhys very properly compares this passage to the well-known boat and ferry of Charon in classical mythology. "There can be no mistake," he says, "as to its [the Isle of the Blest] being the Elysium of the dead, and that going into it meant nothing less than death to ordinary mortals; it was only by special favour that a mortal might enter it otherwise." Passing over Cormac Mac Art's visit to Manannan, and rescue from death of his wife and two children, we find a double account of Diarmat's visit to Tir-fa-tonn—one Irish, one Gaelic. The Irish one is in its main features the counterpart of the Welsh Mabinogion, "The Lady of the Fountain." Diarmat fights with the Knight of the Fountain, and in wrestling with him they both fall into the fountain. Diarmat, arriving at the bottom of it, finds himself in a most beautiful territory, where he does many deeds of valour, and helps a distressed prince to a throne. The Highland tal represents him as sheltering a loathly creature that turns out to be a most beautiful lady under spells. She is the danghter of the King of the Land under the Waves. After presenting Diarmat with a fairy castle, and living with him some time, she left him for her own country, a slight quarrel having occurred He followed her, crossed on the "Charon" boat, much as already described in Loeg's case, and arrived at an island, where down went the boat to a land under the sea! Here Diarmat found his love, but she was deadly sick, to be cured only by a drink from a magical cup in the possession of the King of Wonderland. This he procured by the help of "the messenger of the other world," who advised him to have nothing to do with the King's silver or gold, or even with the daughter, an advice which Diarmat

took, for after healing her, "he took a dislike to her." Diarmat, therefore, was allowed to return from the realms of death.

The "Voyagers' Tales" of Ireland can compare for sensuous imagination very favourably with any other country's "Travellers' Tales." Naturally enough, the tales deal altogether with sea-voyages, generally to some western islands, and they must and do contain many reminiscences of the Happy Isles, where the dead live and the gods reign. Despite the monkish garb they at times assume, for two of the most important are undertaken by monks, the old heathenism peeps out at every turn. Sometimes we hear of a man living in a happy island with the souls of all his descendants as birds giving music around him. Sometimes we get a glimpse of the earthly paradise, where the travellers saw, "a great number of people, beautiful and glorious-looking, wearing rich garments adorned and radiant all over, feasting joyously and drinking from embossed vessels of red gold. The voyagers also heard their cheerful festive songs, and they marvelled greatly, and their hearts were full of gladness at all the happiness they saw and heard. But they did not venture to land." They pass occasionally into the regions of spirits, and are brought into contact with the living and the dead. The wonders they meet with often point a moral, for there are punishments for wickedness. On one island was found a man digging with a spade, the handle of which was on fire, for on earth he was accustomed to dig on Sunday. On another island was found a burly miller feeding his mill with all the perishable things of which people are "so choice and niggardly in this world." Islands of lamentation and islands of laughing are visited; gorgeous palaces and towns, both above and below the waves, are seen, and duly described. The principal voyagers were St Brendan, the sons of Ua Corra and Maelduin.

No argument as to the character or the inhabitants of the next world can be drawn from the modern names given to it. Flaithemnas or, Gaelic, Flaitheamhnas, meant "glory" in its original sense, being derived from the word "Flaithem," a lord, with the abstract termination—*as*. "Innis," an island, forms no part of the word, so that the old derivation and its consequent theories—"Island of chiefs"—fall to the ground. In the same way do the many weird speculations upon the place of pain, fail.

Uffern, in Welsh, and Ifrinn or Iutharn, in Gaelic, are both borrowed from the Latin word, *Infernum*, much to the misfortune of those Druidic theories that make the Celtic hell an "Isle of the Cold Waves." Both Flaitheamhnas and Ifrinn are Christian ideas, and have no counterpart in the Pagan Mythology of the Celts. Our Celtic myths warrant us to speak but of an earthly Paradise, a home of sensuous ease for the departed soul. The glimpses of places of woe in the "Voyagers' Tales" are too much inspired by Christian thought to render speculation upon the Celtic "prison-house" for the soul possible.

What character of body did the spirits of the dead possess, according to the opinions of the Celts? The sensuous paradise argues a material body capable of both physical enjoyments and sorrows. The gods, of course, had bodies somewhat analogous to those of men; these bodies were celestial, but yet quite as substantial as human bodies. The difference was that they were not subject to the trammels of gravitation and visibility, unless they chose. Their persons were more beautiful and majestic than those of men; a "sublimated" humanity characterised them They appeared among mortals—sometimes all of a sudden in the midst of an assembly; ate, drank, and acted, like mortals, in every respect. Sometimes they were seen only by one person in the company, though heard by all, as in the story of Condla Cam, whom the fairy enchanted and abducted. These are, however, the Pagan gods as seen in Christian myth. Yet we find the ghosts of departed heroes appearing in much the same way as the *Side* and Tuatha-De-Danann. The ghost of Caoilte is met with in one or two myths representing different times—in St Patrick's time and King Mongan's time—and on each occasion he appears in "his habit as he lived," full of life and colour, not pale and shadowy. Besides, these ghosts can appear in the day time, as Caoilte used to do. The great poem of the Tain Bo Chuailgne had been lost by the 6th century and it could be recovered only by raising its composer, Fergus MacRoy, from the dead. And this the Saints of Erin were able to accomplish. "Fergus himself," we are told, "appeared in a beautiful form, adorned with brown hair, clad in a green cloak, and wearing a collared gold-ribbed shirt, a gold-hilted sword, and sandals of bronze." He was evidently a very substantial apparition! St Patrick was

also able, though indirectly, to raise the spirit of the great Cuchulainn himself, to meet King Loegaire. The famous champion appeared to him one morning splendidly dressed, with his chariot, horses, and charioteer, the same as when alive. All is minutely described: the charioteer, for instance, was a "lank, tall, stooped, freckle-faced man. He had curling reddish hair upon his head. He had a circlet of bronze upon his forehead which kept his hair from his face; and cups of gold upon his poll behind, into which his hair coiled; a small winged cape on him, with its buttoning at his elbows; a goad of red gold in his hand, by which he urged his horses."

The substantial ghosts of dead heroes are in the myths generally classed as *Side*, among whom also the gods were classed. This, of course, arose from a confusion. The *Side*, I take it, were the ghosts of the glorious dead dwelling in their barrows or tumuli (the *sid*.) At these barrows, doubtless, they were worshipped in accordance with the customs of ancestor worship. This cannot be proved with satisfaction from the Gaelic myths alone, but if we refer to the belief and rites of the Norse peoples, we shall see plenty evidence of the worship of the dead in their barrows. In the Land nama-bok we read that at one place "there was a harrow ('high place') made there, and sacrifices began to be performed there, for they believed that *they died unto these hills*." The editors of the lately published work "Corpus Poeticum Boreale" bring forward quite an array of evidence in proof of the sacredness of these "houses" and barrows, and the belief that dead ancestors lived another life there, and took an interest in the living. "Of the spirit life and the behaviour of the dead," they say, "there is some evidence. In the older accounts they are feasting happily, and busying themselves with the good of their living kindred, with whom they are still united in intense sympathy. . . . . Of the ritual names of the worshipped dead, the oldest we know is 'Anse,' which survived in Iceland into the Middle Ages, in the sense of guardian spirit or genius of a hill. 'Elf' is another name used of spirits of the dead—of divine spirits generally—as the 'Anses' and the 'Elves' of Loka-Senna. Later, in Christian times, it sinks in Scandinavia to mean 'fairy.' . . . . There were *evil spirits*—spirits of bad men—and even vampires and the like, such as the dreadful

Glam and unhallowed spirits and monsters." We may thus argue that the *Side* or *Aes-side* (compare Anse or Aesir above) were properly the divine ancestors, and that the gods, originally in Pagan times quite distinct from them, were afterwards confused with the "sidè," as we have them in the myths. But a still greater confusion overtook these names and ideas as time and Christianity advanced. The "sidè" got mixed up with the "elves," the earth and wood powers, just as they did among the Norse; and the modern "sith" is a mixture of tumulus-dweller and wood-nymph. The gods have almost entirely left the scene; only the Lares—the Gruagachs and Brownies are left. Of old, among the Pagan-Gael, there were, doubtless, ghosts somewhat analagous to those of present superstitions, but they were clearly those of unhallowed men, as we have seen in the case of the Norse beliefs. The modern ghosts follow the analogy of the dwellers in the Greek Hades, and not of the inhabitants of the Earthly Paradise of the Gaels, that "Land of the Leal" where the sun sinks in the west. They grew up during the Middle Ages under the shadow of the Roman Church.

## Celtic Worship and Rites.

A brief glance at the places and rites of worship and burial among the ancient Celts will conclude the religious aspect of their Mythology. The Celts worshipped in temples and in groves; both are frequently referred to in the classical writers. Unfortunately no description of any Celtic temple is vouchsafed us; the natural conclusion we must come to is that they must have been similar, however rude, to the temples of the kindred races of Greece and Rome. Celtic houses were constructed of wood: "great houses," says Strabo, "arched, constructed of planks and wicker, and covered with a heavy thatched roof." They were circular, high, and with either a conical or domed roof. This description applies to the very earliest Celtic buildings, those of Britain and rural Gaul, for the Gauls of Cæsar's time had towns with walls, streets and market places, as opposed to the "dunum," the stockaded hill-top or fortified forest-clearing, of their insular brethren. The Gaulish temples must, therefore, have been of stone, but the British temples were most likely constructed, like the houses, of wood. The earliest Christian churches were also

made of wood, and, for the most part, clearly consisted of the old heathen temples consecrated to Christian use. "The temples of the Idols in Britain," says Pope Gregory (A.D. 601), "ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let holy water be made and sprinkled in the said temples; let altars be erected and relics placed." There are no remains of either Celtic heathen temples or early Christian churches. The theory that the so-called "Druid" circles were Celtic temples is refuted by the two facts that the Celts were Aryans with Aryan culture, and that they made use of metal—even iron—tools from the earliest period we have record of them. The rude stone circles are evidently not the work of a race well acquainted with the use of metal. It is quite true that in religious ceremonies old phases of culture, whether of dress, instruments, or buildings, survive in a higher stage of civilisation. Thus the flint knife of the "stone" age was used on solemn occasions at the Jewish circumcision, and at the sacrifices of old Carthage and Rome; and the gowns of modern clergymen are the survivals of Middle-Age dresses. This, however, operates but to a limited extent; the Jewish temple, unlike their rude stone altars, was built of *hewn* stone, made ready before being brought to the temple, so that "there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of *iron*, heard in the house while it was building." In this way a metal-using people reconciled the old with the new phase of culture, and we cannot suppose that the Celts, even if they did use stone circles, which is most improbable, would not have reconciled them to their state of culture by dressing and shaping the stones, as, indeed, the Bronze Age builders of Stonehenge had begun to do.

Along with temples, the classical writers continually mention "groves" as especial places where Celtic worship was conducted. A grove was a secret recess embowered by tall trees, and marked by votive offerings, insignia of the gods, and an altar of stone, or some equivalent. The distinguishing features of a grove were secrecy and sacredness. Groves are prior in time to temples, and Grimm has analysed the Teutonic words for "temple" to signify "wood" or even "grove." He says—"The earliest seat of heathen worship was in groves, whether on mountain or in pleasant mead; there the first temples were afterwards built, and there also were the tribunals of the nation." The classical words for temple—

Latin, *templum*, Greek, *temenos*, both from the root *tem*, to cut, mean, originally, a "clearing"—a forest clearing, in fact. The Greek *temenos*, which may mean a sacred grove, is often used it, speaking of Celtic places of worship. The Gaulish word of like signification was *nemeton*, which appears in several place-names in Britain, Gaul, and Asia Minor; in the latter country the Galatian council of the twelve tetrarchies met at a place called Drynemeton, that is, "oak-grove." In old Irish, the word appears as *nemed*, a chapel, and is the same in root as the Gaelic *neamh*, heaven, and the Latin *nemus*, a grove. Lucan, in the following lines, gives us a vivid description of a Gaulish grove, dwelling on the superstitions and miracles connected with it, and alluding to the worship of the "secretum illud," the abstract existence, which Tacitus says the Germans reverenced, who, here as elsewhere in religion, differed but little from the Celts.

"A grove, inviolate from length of age,
With interwoven branches, mazy cage,
Enclosed a darkened space of earth and air,
With chilly shades, where sun could enter ne'er.
There not the rustic gods nor satyrs sport,
Nor slyvans, gods of groves, with nymphs resort;
But barbarous priests, on altars dire, adore
Their gods, and stain each tree with human gore.
If miracles of old can be received
And pious tales of gods can be believed,
There not the feathered songster builds her nest,
Nor lonely dens conceal the savage beast;
There no tempestuous winds presume to fly,
Ev'n lightnings glance aloof, obliquely by.
Nor ever breezes lift or lay the leaves,
But shivering horror in the branches heaves:
The plenteous stream the darkened fountains leaves:
The images of gods, a mournful band,
Have ne'er been shaped so rude by artist's hand—
Misshapen forms with limbs looped off forth stand.
The very place, with oaks all hoar and drear,
Inspires the gazer's soul with numbing fear:
'Tis not the deities of wonted form
They worship thus 'mid terrors and alarm,
But gods unknown—it but increases fear
They do not know the gods they so revere.
Oft, as fame tells, the earth in throbs of woe
Is heard to groan from hollow depths below;
The baleful yew, though dead, has oft been seen,
To rise from earth and spring with dusky green;

With sparkling flames the trees, unburning shine,
And round their boles prodigious serpents twine.
The pious worshippers approach not near,
But shun their gods and kneel with distant fear;
The priest himself, when Phœbus, god of light,
Rolling, has reached his full meridian height,
Or night rules all, dreads to approach the place
And shuns the masters of the grove to face."

The favourite tree among the Gauls for groves was the oak; "the Druids," says Pliny, "choose groves of oak and conduct no sacrifice without its leaf," and he suggests that the name Druid is from the same root as Greek *Drus*, an oak, a derivation which is yet the only one worth consideration of the many suggested. The sacredness of groves and of trees has not yet died out among the Celts. In Ireland it is counted especially unlucky to cut down trees in raths and such early structures. Mr Kinahan, in the "Folklore Record" for 1882, says:—A man, near Kilmaganny, County Kilkenny, came to me in a great state of mind one morning, as the previous night some one had cut a thorn tree in a rath on his land, and some ill-luck must come to him before the end of the year. I tried to console him by saying the year [it being October] was nearly out, so that he would probably live out the charm, but curiously enough before Christmas he buried a fine girl of a daughter."

The Celts made use of statues in their worship: Cæsar mentions that there were very many statues of Mercury, and other writers, as Lucan, in the lines quoted above, bear testimony to the same fact. Before they used images, they were content with emblems of the gods; thus we are told by a writer of the second century that the Celts worshipped Zeus, and that a tall oak represented his statue, a reference which again puts the Celts on a level with the Germans of Tacitus, who had no statues, and even thought it an impiety to represent celestial grandeur in human shape. Some remains of Gaulish art in statue-making have weathered the ravages of ages, and of these the statuettes of Taranis are the most numerous and interesting. Uninfluenced by Roman or Greek art, their statues were rude and unshapely, as Lucan says:—"Simulacraque maesta deorum arte carent." Gildas speaks of the grim-faced idols mouldering in the deserted temples; and idols of bronze to the number of nineteen were dug

up at Devizes in 1714. A true Celtic statue called by its Breton votaries the "Groah-Goard," and known as the "Venus of Quinipily" was worshipped in Britanny till the 17th century. It was a huge misshapen figure, 7 feet high with a large and uncouth body, a flattened bust, and eyes, nose, and mouth like those of an Egyptian idol. We meet in Irish history with the mystical figure of Crom or Crom-Cruaich, king-idol of Erin, first, in the reign of King Tiernmas (1543 B.C.), who, we are told, died along with three-fourths of his people whilst they were "ic adrad Chroim-Chroich, rig idaill hErenn," and, a second time, in St Patrick's life, who found at Mag Slecht ("adoration plain") in Cavan, Crom-Cruaich, the chief idol of Erin, covered with gold and silver, and having twelve other idols about it covered with brass. The saint caused the earth to swallow these up as far as their heads, where they still were, as a sign of the miracle, when the pious Middle-Age scribe was writing.

The Gaulish altars and also the Gaelic altars were pillars of stone inscribed with emblems of the sun and moon, or a beast, bird, or something which symbolised some force of nature—"dealba nan dula"—representations of the elements, as Cormac calls them. Another feature of Celtic groves and temples consisted of the many votive tablets and images, with representation of limbs, faces, and bodily parts, hung up on the walls or suspended from the trees. These were set up as thank-offerings for rescue from some sickness or pain in the part represented, or with a view that relief from pain might come. The "rag-bush" by the modern wells, and the crutches and other accessories of infirmities left at holy wells, are a remnant of ancient and analogous beliefs in the deities of the fountains. A more ghastly sight, however, would be presented by the many heads of animals, and, possibly, of men hung up in the groves, like trophies of the chase, but really intended as votive offerings, and rendered, at times, all the ghastlier by having their mouths prized and kept open by sticks of wood. This custom is still kept in remembrance in modern architectural designs.

For Celtic religious rites we have to trust almost entirely, in attempting to discover them, to the superstitions and customs of Christian and modern times. Superstition is the survival, in another phase of culture, of earlier religion and science. At

present we shall only deal with some customs and superstitions that appear to bear on Celtic religious ritual, leaving the wider question of quaint customs and superstitions to be dealt with afterwards. The classical writers mention but little of Celtic rites. The human sacrifices attracted most attention: "They sacrifice men," says Diodorus, "striking them at the place above the diaphragm [on the back, Strabo says], and from their fall, the convulsion of the limbs and the flow of the blood, they predict the future." When the Romans put a stop to their human sacrifices, vestiges, however, remained, as Mela says, of the old but abolished savagery, and "just as they refrain from going the whole length of slaughter, they nevertheless touch and graze the persons devoted to sacrifice after bringing them to the altars." An interesting parallel to this in modern times occurs in the Samoan islands. There cannibalism has for ages been unknown, yet the punishment that carries the highest disgrace among them is to put the delinquent into a *cold oven*, an evident survival from the time when such a person would be roasted and eaten. The remembrance of these old Celtic human sacrifices was until lately kept up at the Beltane fires.

The only religious rites of any consequence that can be pointed to are those connected with the worship of fire and the changes of the year. It must not be supposed that the Celts were greater worshippers of fire, sun, and moon than the other European nations, and that this worship was distinctive of them. The fire worship was equally as strong among Teutons, Romans, and Greeks as among the Celts, and quite as long maintained into modern times. But Celtic idiosyncracies bring some features of the worship and practices into greater prominence. The custom of showing reverence by walking round persons or things, keeping the right hand towards them, is derived from the apparent course of the sun, and is known as "deiseil" *(dextralis)*, "right-hand-wise." In India the old name for the custom is similarly the "right-hand-turn," *dakshiman kri.* The "need-fire"—Gaelic, *teine-eiginn*—is a "survival" from a very ancient phase of culture, and, possibly, from a time when men lived in a warmer climate, and the rubbing of sticks easily produced fire. It is also significant that, in the best preserved form of the custom, the need-fire makers must have no metal about them, a survival which points

to the Stone Age. Another general fact in regard to Celtic need-fire was that all the district fires within sight had previously to be extinguished, to be re-lighted only from the pure need-fire. The need-fire was variously produced. In Mull, about 1767, a hill-top was selected, within sight of which all fires were put out, and then the pure fire was produced by *turning a wheel over nine spindles of wood* until the friction caused combustion. Martin in his "Western Isles" thus describes it:—"The *tinegin* they used as an antidote against the plague or murrain in cattle, and it was performed thus—All the fires in the parish were extinguished, and then eighty-one married men, being thought the necessary number for effecting this design, took two great planks of wood, and nine of them were employed by turns, who by their united efforts rubbed one of the planks against the other until the heat thereof produced fire; and from this fire each family is supplied with new fire, which is no sooner kindled than a pot full of water is quickly set on it, and afterwards sprinkled on the people infected with the plague or upon the cattle that have the murrain." In Caithness the friction was produced by working a horizontal wooden bar, supplied with levers, in two upright pieces of wood, into which it was inserted at each end. In all cases, within Christian historic times, the need-fire was lighted as a charm against the plague, whether it attacked men or cattle. Fire has always been considered the purifier *par excellence*, and clearly no fire could be so pure as the need-fire, which was there and then produced for the first time. But though latterly restricted to being a charm against the plague, the need-fire shows clear traces of a higher religious purpose. These fires were lighted at the great festivals of the solar and lunar year, and from them all the fires of the neighbourhood, previously extinguished, were re-lighted. Priests, we know, presided at these sacred fires, and men and cattle were passed through them, as Cormac and others tell us. One of St Patrick's first struggles with King Loegaire was over the sacred Beltane (?) fire. "Fire is kindled by him at that place on Easter Eve," says a Middle-Irish life of the saint; "Loegaire is enraged when he sees the fire. For that was a prohibition of Tara which the Gael had, and no one durst kindle a fire in Ireland on that day until it had been kindled first at Tara at the solemnity. And the Druids said 'unless that fire be

quenched before this night, he whose fire it is shall have the kingdom of Ireland for ever.'" But that fire was not quenched, and the boldness of the missionary, along with the inevitable miracles, brought Loegaire and his people to the side of the Saint and Christianity.

The need-fire and the sunwise-turn, "deiseil," are but the outward embodiments of the great worship of fire and light. The discovery how to make fire at will was a tremendous step in human progress, and has impressed itself on the oldest mythologies in the many myths in regard to the "descent of fire.' In India the god is taken down from his hiding place in heaven and given to man, and his sign is the wooden fire-drill, *pramantha*. Prometheus and history represent the Greek equivalent myth. The sun was reverenced by imitation of its course—the "deiseil," though, also as still on the Continent any day, the Gaels at Beltane morn worshipped the rising sun by taking off the caps, and saluting him with "failte" or hail. For distinctive instances of rites we must have recourse to the observances and customs of certain festal days throughout the year.

The year is a solar period, the unit of which is the day, but ancient peoples felt the want of an intermediate reckoner of time, and this was found in the moon and its monthly period. In fact, the moon was the measurer of time *par excellence*, as the words for month in English, Latin, Greek, and Gaelic prove, for they are from the root of "moon." Its four phases give rise to weeks of seven or eight days, eight among the Romans; and the Celts, as well as the Teutons and Greeks, reckoned their time by nights, and not by days. Pliny informs us that the Celtic year and the Celtic months began on the 6th day of the moon. Customs and superstitions in regard to the moon and its waxing and waning still survive in connection with the cutting of wood or turf, the starting of new enterprises or of a journey, and such like. The lunar time does not square with the solar time of revolution, and the ancients were in endless confusion in regard to their calendars. The Celts corrected lunar by solar time every thirty years, which Pliny tells us was their cycle. The month may have been alternately 29 and 30 days, to suit the 29½ days of lunar revolution, and possibly by having 13 lunar months for eleven years of the thirty, they managed to make the solar fit with the

lunar time to within a few days. The year was originally divided into two seasons—summer and winter, *gam* and *sam*, and then spring was added, the name of which differs in root in the two great branches of the Celtic race. The week is most probably non-Celtic in idea, and also in names to a very great extent. The Welsh names of the days of the week are Roman; the Gaelic names are mixed, Roman and Christian. Sunday is Di-domhnuich (dies *dominica);* Monday, Di-luain (dies Lunæ); Tuesday, Di-Mairt (dies Martis); Wednesday, Di-ciadaoin (dies primi *jejunii*, "day of first fast;" for religious people, as Bede tells us, fasted on Wednesdays as well as Fridays), a purely church name; Thursday, Di-ardaoin, or, Irish, Dia-dardaoin, "day between two fasts;" Friday, Di-h-aoine, "day of fast;" and Saturday, Di-Sathuirne (dies Saturni.)

Fire and sun worship, and along with these, the worship of the earth-powers, fell on the four great solar periods, the two solstices and the two equinoxes. Lunar time was made to fit these by holding the feasts on the first full moon, or the 14th of the month, after the equinox or solstice. The great winter feast on December 25th, when the sun just turned on its northward course again, was solemnised in honour of the new birth of the "unconquered sun," dies natalis invicti solis, and was held in Rome in honour of the sun-god Mithra, of Persian origin, whose festival was finally established by Aurelian as national and Roman, about A.D. 273. A hundred years later the Christian Church accepted it, doubtfully and reluctantly, as the natal day of Christ, thus entering on a course which it consistently pursued of christianising all pagan rites, festivals, and even temples. The midsummer solstice was therefore dedicated to St John the Baptist, and so on. The Celtic, or rather Gaelic festivals, of a distinctive kind, are three in number; Bealltuinn (1st May), Lunasduinn (1st August), and Samhuinn (1st November.) Why these festivals should be a month later than the solar periods in each case, is doubtful; but it is clear that these periods suit the climatic changes of the seasons in the North better than the earlier, though truer, solar periods.

The great festival of Beltane occurred on May-day. Cormac's reference to this pagan festival is the first and most important:—"*Belltaine, i.e.* bil tene, a goodly fire, *i.e.* two fires

which Druids used to make through incantations (or with great incantations), and they used to bring the cattle to those fires as a preservative against diseases of each year." Here we have to note that the fire was made by Druidic incantations, which means no more than that it was made by the "tinegin," or need-fire method, and that it was a preservative against disease in cattle. Cormac's derivation has the misfortune of making a wrong division of the syllables of the word, which are beallt-uinn, or belt-ane; not bel-tane. We must reject any derivation that so divides the word, and hold that the latter part of the word has nothing to do with *teine* fire, but is, probably, the *—n* termination of most words of time. Hence derivations which connect the word with the fire of Baal or Bel are out of place, granting that such a god as Bel is Celtic, and not invented for the occasion. Belinus is the Celtic Apollo. Mr Fitzgerald's derivation of Beltane, from bile-tineadh, "fire-tree," is to be rejected on the ground of wrong division of the word, and his instances adduced of the existence in Ireland of usages pointing to a belief in a world-tree of the Norse type appear to be too slight and too little founded on general Celtic, especially Scottish, traditions in regard to the Beltane festival. The world-tree, and consequent may-pole, are not distinctively, if at all, Celtic in this connection. "The first of May," says M. D'Arbois de Jubainville, "was consecrated to Beltene, one of the names of the god of death, the god who gave and took away life," the root in this case being the pre-historic infinitive *beltiu*, to die. Why the festival of the beginning of the summer, the outburst of nature, and the conquest of the death and winter powers should be sacred, not to the god of life and light, but to his opposite, is a thing which this derivation and theory cannot account for. The November feast might well be one where the loss of the sun-god and victory of the god of death were commemorated, but the first of summer is far from appropriate for this. Both in Welsh and Gaelic myth the victory of the light-gods is indicated on the first of May; Gwyn fights for Cordelia, and the Tuath de Danann overcame the Firbolg, the Earth powers, on that day. Grimm hesitatingly hints what appears to be the true derivation: —The Norse sun-god is called Balder, and he suggests that this is connected with Lithuanian *baltas*, "white." The connection

of Beltane with these two words is confirmed by the Gaelic saying of "la buidhe Bealltuinn," "yellow May-day," which may be a reminiscence of the primary meaning of Beltane.

We have numerous accounts of the Beltane rites, all pointing to fire and sun worship—phases of purification, sacrifice, and divination. One of the best accounts is given in the Old Statistical Account of the parish of Callander. "Upon the first of May," it says, "which is called Beltan or Bàl-tein, all the boys in a township or hamlet meet on the moors. They cut a table in the green sod, of a round figure, by casting a trench in the ground of such circumference as to hold the whole company. They kindle a fire and dress a repast of eggs and milk in the consistence of a custard. They knead a cake of oatmeal which is toasted at the embers against a stone. After the custard is eaten up, they divide the cake into so many portions, as similar as possible to one another in size and shape, as there are persons in the company. They daub one of these portions all over with charcoal until it be perfectly black. They put all the bits of the cake into a bonnet. Every one, blindfold, draws out a portion. He who holds the bonnet is entitled to the last bit. Whoever draws the black bit, is the devoted person who is to be sacrificed to Baal, whose favour they implore in rendering the year productive of the sustenance of man and beast. There is little doubt of these inhuman sacrifices having been once offered in this country, as well as in the East, although they now pass from the act of sacrificing, and only compel the *devoted* person to leap three times through the flames; with which the ceremonies of the festival are closed." To this sensible account and its inferences, all but the reference to Baal, we agree fully. Most authorities hold, with Cormac, that there were two fires, between which and through which they passed their cattle and even their children. Criminals were made to stand between the two fires, and hence the proverb, in regard to a person in extreme danger, as the Rev. D Macqueen gives it, "He is betwixt two Beltein fires." Pennant adds some interesting facts: the rites began with spilling some caudle on the ground by way of libation; whereupon "everyone takes a cake of oatmeal upon which are raised nine square knobs, each one dedicated to some particular being, the supposed preserver of their flocks and herds, or to some particular animal, the real destroyer

of them. Each person then turns his face to the fire, breaks off a knob, and flinging it over his shoulders, says, 'This I give to thee, preserve thou my horses; this to thee, preserve thou my sheep,' and so on. After that, they use the same ceremony to the noxious animals: 'This I give to thee, O fox! spare thou my lambs: this to thee, O hooded crow! this to thee, O eagle.'" Shaw, the historian of Moray, tells us that the fires were kindled with a flint; the "Druidic incantations" of Cormac and the "tinegin" were not used within the last century at least for lighting the Beltane fire; their use seems latterly to have been restricted to raising the need-fire during cattle plagues.

The midsummer festival, christianised into St John's Eve and Day, for the celebration of the summer solstice, is not a specially Celtic, as it is a Teutonic, feast. The wheels of wood, wrapped round with straw, set on fire, and sent rolling from a hillock summit, to end their course in some river or water, which thus typified the descending course of the sun onward till next solstice, is represented on Celtic ground by the occasional use of a wheel for producing the *tinegin*, but more especially by the custom in some districts of rolling the Beltane bannocks from the hill summit down its side. Shaw remarks—"They made the Deas-sail [at Midsummer] about their fields of corn with burning torches of wood in their hands, to obtain a blessing on their corn. This I have often seen, *more, indeed, in the Lowlands* than in the Highlands. On Midsummer Eve, they kindle fires near their cornfields, and walk round them with burning torches." In Cornwall last century they used to perambulate the villages carrying lighted torches, and in Ireland the Eve of Midsummer was honoured with bonfires *round which they carried torches.*

The specially Celtic feast or "Feill" was held some five weeks later, on the 1st August, Lammas Day. It is called in Scottish Gaelic "Lunasduinn," in Irish "Lunasd," old Irish "Lugnasad," the fair of Lug. The legend says that Luga of the Long Arms, the Tuatha De Danann king, instituted this fair in honour of his foster-mother Tailtiu, queen of the Firbolgs. Hence the place where it was held was called Tailtiu after her, and is the modern Teltown. The fair was held, however, in all the capitals of ancient Ireland on that day. Games and manly sports characterised the assemblies. Luga, it may be noted, is the sun-god,

who thus institutes the festival, and it is remarkable that at ancient Lyons, in France, called of old Lug-dunum, a festival was held on this very day, which was famous over all Gaul.

Equal to Beltane in importance was the solemnity of Hallowe'en, known in Gaelic as *Samhuinn* or "summerend." Like Beltan it was sacred to the gods of light and of earth; Ceres, Apollo, and Dis also, must have been the deities whose worship was honoured. The earth goddess was celebrated for the ingathering of the fruits; Apollo or Belinus and Proserpine were bewailed for their disappearing from earth, and Dis, who was god of death and winter's cold, and who was especially worshipped by the Celts, as Cæsar says, was implored for mercy, and his subjects, the manes of the dead, had special worship directed to them. It was, indeed, a great festival—the festival of fire, fruits, and death. The features that still remain in popular customs in regard to Hallowe'en clearly show its connection with the gods of fire and fate; bonfires and divination are its characteristics. The Statistical Account, already quoted, says of Hallowe'en:—"On All-Saint's Even they set up bonfires in every village. When the bonfire is consumed, the ashes are carefully collected in the form of a circle. There is a stone put in, near the circumference, for every person of the several families interested in the bonfire, and whatever stone is moved out of its place or injured before next morning, the person represented by that stone is devoted or *fey*, and is supposed not to live twelve months from that day." A somewhat similar custom is recorded by Pennant as existing in North Wales, where every family made a great bonfire in the most conspicuous place near the house, and when the fire was extinguished, every one threw a white stone into the ashes, having first marked it. If next morning any of these stones is found wanting, they have a notion that the person who threw it in will die before next Hallowe'en. We can only refer to the various laughable and serious methods of divination resorted to on Hallowe'en night to read into the future; our national poet Burns has left us a graphic picture of the night and its ceremonies in "Halloween." It may be remarked that the mystic apple plays an important part in these ceremonies, as it also does in so many Celtic fairy tales. The custom in various parts of keeping a heap of cakes, called *soul-cakes*, to give away to all-comers, and more

especially to the poor, clearly commemorates the ancient offering to the dead of food on this night. What was dedicated in Pagan times to the manes of the dead, is in modern times converted into doles of bread to the poor, as Mr Tylor points out.

Martin records a religious rite of the Lews people that must not be passed over here. "The inhabitants of this island had an ancient custom to sacrifice to a sea-god called Shony, at Hallo-tide, in the following manner:—The inhabitants round the island came to the Church of St Malvey, having each man his provision along with him; every family furnished a peck of malt, and this was brewed into ale; one of their number was picked out to wade into the sea up to the middle, and carrying a cup of ale in his hand, standing still in that posture, cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Shony, I give you this cup of ale, hoping that you'll be so kind as to send us plenty of sea-ware for enriching our ground for the ensuing year'; and so threw the cup of ale into the sea. This was performed in the night-time. At his return to land they all went to church, where there was a candle burning upon the altar; and then standing silent for some time, one of them gave a signal, at which the candle was put out, and immediately all of them went to the fields, where they fell a-drinking their ale and spent the remainder of the night in dancing, singing, etc." This they believed to be a powerful means to procure a plentiful crop. This superstition is but lately dead, though the sacrifice had been repressed, for they proceeded in spring to the end of a long reef and invoked "Briannuil" to send a strong north wind to drive plenty sea-ware ashore. There are other instances of sacrifice within the last two hundred years in the Highlands. An annual sacrifice on the 25th August to St Mourie in Applecross and Gairloch troubled the Dingwall Presbytery in the 17th century. These rites consisted in immolating bulls, pouring of milk on hills as oblations, visiting ruined chapels and "circulating" them, divining by putting the head into a hole in a stone, and the worshipping of wells and stones. The bulls were sacrificed "in ane heathenish manner" for the recovery of man and beast from disease. A Morayshire farmer some thirty years ago, in the case of a murrain, lighted the need-fire with all due ceremony, then dug a pit and sacrificed an ox to the "unknown" spirit. Sacrifice

of cocks for epilepsy has not been infrequent in modern times; this is done by burying them alive.

Other festival days retain a spice of heathen Celticism about them yet. The last night of the year the fire must not be allowed to go out, and there is a particular dislike at this time to give a neighbour a "kindling" or even light for a pipe, a feeling which in some degree exists at Beltane and Hallowe'en. Candlemas day is known as La Fheill-Brighde, St Brigit's day, who is really the canonised fire-goddess, the Vesta of the heathen Gaels. Some customs in regard to her worship were mentioned already, and Martin relates an interesting custom in the Western Isles on Candlemas, showing St Brigit clearly on the aspect of Vesta, the hearth and home goddess. The mistress and servants of each family take a sheaf of oats and dress it up in women's apparel, put it in a large basket and lay a wooden club by it, and this they call Briid's-bed, and then they cry thrice, "Briid is come, Briid is welcome." Next morning they look in the ashes to see the impression of Briid's club there, and if they do they reckon it a true presage of a good crop and prosperous year, and the contrary they regard an ill omen. Shrove Tuesday was a great day in the Highlands for cock-fighting: then each scholar brought cocks to fight and decide who should be king and queen of the school for the ensuing year. It was also a noted day for ball-playing. Its popularity for nut-burning and marriage-divination by putting symbolic articles into brose or cakes is yet great.

## Celtic Burial Rites.

The customs at burial and the disposal of the dead among the early Celts can only be discovered in a general way. The earlier Aryan races evidently burned the bodies of the dead, preserved the bones in urns, and raised over them a circular mound. The poems of Homer present us with what may be regarded as typical examples of early Greek and Celtic burials. A pyre of wood was constructed, and on the top of it the body was laid. Sheep and oxen were slain, their fat was placed about and upon the body, and their carcases were heaped around it. Jars of honey and oil were placed on the pile. Horses, favourite dogs, and captives were slain and cast on the pyre, and the whole set on fire. A wail was raised and the dead addressed

by name. When the fire burned low, it was finally extinguished with wine, the bones were collected—"the whitened bones," as the poet says—and placed in an urn of gold. Then they dug a grave, and raised over it a mound. In historic times, in Greece and Republican Rome, the burning of the dead was the exception, not the rule; but in Imperial Rome the custom revived, and became the rule, while inhumation, at least of the better classes, was the exception. Christianity, however, finally stopped the burning of the dead. The old mounds had also developed into the elegance of built tombs, vaults, and monuments with inscriptions and other accessories of civilisation. Among the Celts of Gaul in Cæsar's time, evidently the Homeric age of burial was still prevalent; all the classical writers of that and the succeeding century testify to the burning of the bodies among the Gauls, but they are silent as to the character of the tombs. "Their funerals," Cæsar says, "are magnificent and costly, considering their civilisation; and all that they think was dear to them when alive they put in the fire, even animals; and shortly before this generation the slaves and dependants that they were considered to have loved, were burned along with them in the regular performance of funeral rites." Mela confirms this fully: "They burn and bury along with the dead whatever is of use to them when alive, and there were some who, of their own free will, cast themselves on the funeral piles of their relatives, expecting to live along with them." Thus, we have not merely the burning of the bodies, but also the burning of things useful in this life, and more especially of slaves and relatives; the latter practice having become, previous to historic times, obsolete. No trace of the remembrance of a time when the dead were burnt can be found in the earliest histories and myths of Ireland or Britain, although abundance of instances occur where personal and other property has been *buried* along with the dead; and even the immolation of captives is not unknown, as when the Munster hostages were buried alive around the grave of Fiachra, about the end of the fourth century of our era. Sacrifice of animals is referred to in the story of Etain, the fairy queen of Eochaid Airem, who was left to "dig the *Fert* (grave), to raise the wail, and slay the quadrupeds," for Ailill the king's brother. Burial of arms is mentioned more than once; an old "Druidic"

poem celebrates the fall of Mog-Neid, King of Munster in the second century of our era; it says—

"The grave of Mog-Neid is on Magh Tualaing,
With his lance at his shoulder,
With his club, so rapid in action,
With his helmet, with his sword."

The Scottish Gaelic "Lay of Dargo" presents us with a much more touching and important instance of devotion than any of these. Dargo's wife expressed her love for her husband when the concocted story of his death was brought to her, the effects of which killed her, in these words—

"Chi mi 'n seobhag, chi mi 'n cù
Leis an d'roinn mo rùn an t-sealg,
'S o na b'ionmhuinn leis an triuir,
Càirear sinn 'san ùir le Dearg."

I see the hawk, I see the hound,
With which my love performed the chase,
And as the three to him were bound,
Let us in earth with Dearg have place.

What kind of tomb was erected over them? In answer to this question, we are at once referred to the numerous barrows and tumuli scattered over the country, and more especially in Ireland, where the remarkable mounds on the Boyne could not fail to attract the attention of all ages. "The traditions and history of the mound-raising period have in other countries passed away," says Standish O'Grady very truly; "but in Ireland they have been all preserved in their original fulness and vigour, hardly a hue has faded, hardly a minute circumstance has been suffered to decay." A proud claim is this, and one which for the very uniqueness among the nations that it postulates for Ireland, invites criticism and suspicion. The Euhemerist historians and scribes of Ireland have woven an intimate chain of connection between every event of their modest (!) four thousand years' chronology and the topography of their country; be it the fortunes of Cesair before the Flood, or of Partolan immediately after, or of Brian Boromh a generation or two before the writer's time, yet every event is chronicled with a minuteness of genealogy, detail, and localisation that is quite oblivious of the perspective of time, the long roll of ages with their change of customs, and the uncertainty as to the far distant past. We saw that the

Irish gods were changed to kings; nay, more, their tombs can still be seen on the banks of the Boyne! There are the barrows of the Dagda and his heroes, and there, too, Cuchulain rests beneath his mound. But just about his time Eochaid Airem had introduced the practice of simple burial beneath the earth, and had abolished the old custom of burying the dead "by raising great heaps of stones over their bodies." These barrows are, mythologically considered, pre-Celtic; they are beyond the ken of Irish history and myth, just as much as the Cromlechs are, which popular archæology accounts for as the "Beds of Diarmat and Grainne" or "Granna's Beds"—the beds occupied by this pair in their flight before Finn. Considered, again archæologically, they belong also to the races that preceded the Celts, as the character of the interments and of the accompanying articles proves. We have, however, continued reference in the myths and tales to the burial of early Christian times—the grave, the stone over it, and the inscription. How little the Irish writers understood the change of customs wrought by time is seen in the description by an Irish writer of the 12th century of the burial of Patroclus at Troy; Achilles "built his tomb, and he set up his stone and wrote his name." Homer's account has already been given. The Irishman described the custom of his own time as existing in the time of the Trojan War.

# THE HEROIC TALES OF THE CELTS.

The materials of Irish Mythology have well been divided by M. D'Arbois de Jubainville into three leading parts: there is, first, the mythological cycle which deals with the gods and the ethnology of the country, and which we have treated in the foregoing pages. There are, secondly, the Cuchulain cycle, and, thirdly, the Ossianic cycle, both dealing with the heroes of the race. Between the god-cycle and the hero-cycles there is a long break, which is filled up in the histories with meagre details, but full genealogies of intermediate kings, with now and then an oasis of mythical incident, like Cimbaeth's conquest of the war-goddess, Macha Red-mane, and Labraid Loingseach's hunted youth and punishment of the usurping uncle. A wonderful list it is! Are these kings and chiefs but shadows conjured from the fertile imagination of bards and monks? Most of them undoubtedly are mere genealogical stop-gaps, though a few names and events may have lived on in legend and myth. For, what are the facts in regard to the literary documents of Irish history? None go back in MS. earlier than the year 1100, and the language in which the oldest MS. is written is just the language of the time at which it was written. It is useless to postulate for the composition of the literary matter a date of six centuries or more previously; the writings may be as old as that and older, but their final recension in the 11th century is couched in the language of that time, and great caution must be exercised in sifting out what is and what is not old. At the best, the result remains unsatisfactory, and unsafe to theorise upon. Yet, it must be said that Irish history from after the time of St Patrick may be trusted, for it can be often tested by contemporary and other documents. When we remember the mythical history of St Patrick himself, and that he is divisible into three different personages, dating from 400 to 500—for St Patrick dies at the age of 122 in the 14th year of King Lughaidh!—we are entitled to

place little confidence in Irish history antecedent to him. In fact, Irish history begins with the introduction of Christianity. Previous to that, it is mythical and legendary. There are three distinctive periods, however; first, there is the mythological epoch commencing with Partolan and ending with the expulsion of the Tuatha-De-Danann and the instalment of the Milesian race. Then, secondly, comes the Milesian race of kings, filling up the void of fifteen hundred years till the Christian era or shortly before it, when the Cuchulain cycle of events begins. Again, thirdly, the period from the beginning of the Christian era to the time of St Patrick is one which may be trusted possibly in its leading features. The *vraisimilitude* of Irish history has imposed on the best scholars, and even Professor Windisch is inclined to euhemerise the Cuchulain and Fenian cycles, and to believe the stories of the reigns of Conchobar and Cormac. But, really, the feats performed by Cuchulain are in the highest degree mythical; his life is a fairy tale that fits not into history, and, indeed, his name has no place in the "Annals of the Four Masters!" Nor is Finn and his Fenian militia (!) band much better treated; he is, indeed, mentioned in an obscure way as having fallen in A.D. 283, while the fatal field of Gabhra is represented as an ordinary event in Irish history unconnected with the collapse of a mighty and miraculous host. The fact is, the Irish annalists found it difficult to fit the fairy heroes into their histories, just as is the case with the British Arthur. There is no place for him in the kingly lists, and he is accordingly, like Finn, a "dux belli." Yet the fairy tales and romances regard these heroes as kings and princes, but the histories cannot recognise them; they do not fit in well, for, in reality, they belong to no particular time, but are the incarnation of the national deities in national heroes. These heroes cannot, therefore, be tied down to history; the most popular incidents in their lives are of a wholly unhistorical character—enchantments, fairy scenes and chases, gigantic heroes that over-stride firths and valleys—such are the characteristics of nearly all the tales. The historical part is poor and non-popular. The only historical incident recognised, and that, too, doubtfully, by the popular imagination, is the battle of Gabhra, where the Feni were overthrown; and that battle, if historical at all, was fought, not by the Finn and Oscar of popular tradition, but by

some of the numerous chiefs and kinglets bearing the names of the mythic heroes.

The Cuchulain cycle is set down as occurring at the beginning of the Christian era, while the Fenian cycle is placed three hundred years later. In any case, the two cycles are quite distinct in their characteristics. In the Cuchulain cycle, the hero *alone* performs all the wonders; for instance, Cuchulain and his charioteer *alone* keep the host of Meave at bay for a long period, until the princes of Ulster recover their powers. Now in the Fenian cycle, the heroes are banded together, and are captains of armies. Cuchulain rides on a chariot; the Fingalians know of none such—they are a band of foot soldiers. The two cycles have thus distinctive features, and they may be compared to the hero-cycles of Classical Mythology. These divide into two; there are the demigod heroes like Hercules, Theseus and Perseus, who perform their feats alone; and, again, there are the more mortal heroes of the Trojan type, like Achilles, who heads a band of men and performs marvels; but, on the whole, the Feni rather belong to the Argonautic conception, which is somewhat earlier and is a thorough fairy tale, falling between the Hercules type and the purely Trojan type. The Arthurian cycle is Trojan in its characteristics.

Of Cuchulain's birth, "strange tales are told." Nominally the son of Sualtam, he in reality was the son of the god Luga—the sun-god, whose far-darting and flashing qualities he displays continually, for his power lies greatly in the use of the sling, and in fighting from the car. As a young man, he, like all fairy and mythic heroes, is lowly brought up, and serves Culann, the smith, if we can trust so evidently "eponymic" a myth, and hence he was called Cu-Chulain, "Culaun's Hound." But his name more likely contains the common prefix *cu* or *con*, signifying superiority, and not dog. Queen Meave makes a raid on Ulster to get the famous bull, Donn Chualgne, and the Ulster people, all save Cuchulain, are placed under a spell, whereby they cannot move to fight. Cuchulain alone withstands the host of Meave, dealing death with his sling, and fighting the champions "at the ford." But he fails, apparently, through demoniac influences, and Meave gets the bull; but, as she returns home, the Ulster men awake and pursue. A battle is fought, Cuchulain again appears, and

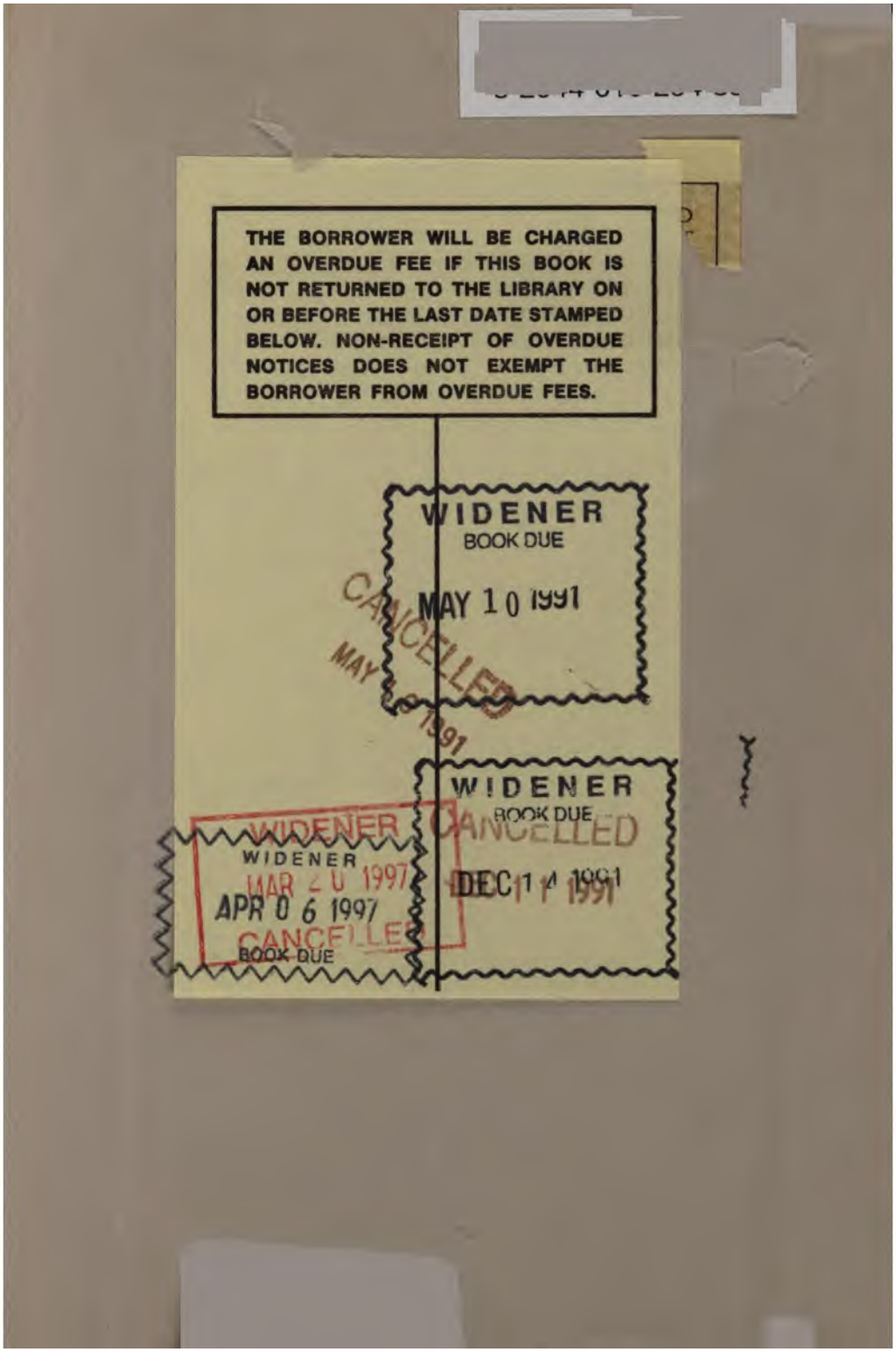
carries all before him. Such is the rationalistic history of the "Cowspoil of Cualgne;" but evidently the spoil is connected with the cattle of the sun-god, and is quite mythical, as Professor Windisch reluctantly remarked, only to controvert it inconsistently. The other incidents of his life are his mythical education; his feats; the slaying of his son, Conlaoch, by mistake—the story of Soohrab and Rustem of Persia; and his tragic death through witchcraft spells.

Finn is also a fairy hero; his birth is anteceded by his father's violent death and his mother's flight; he is brought up in obscurity; does wonderful youthful exploits; tastes of the salmon of knowledge, and so, by bruising his thumb, which was burnt in the process of broiling the fish, in his mouth, can always discover the truth; acquires his father's position, and is great. Innumerable are the tales of the Feni. The real Fenian tales are composed of fairy battles, scenes, and spells; but they have got tinged with real events, such as, in Scotland, the descents of the Norsemen; and, consequently, Finn's fairy opponent sometimes partakes of a Norse name and character. Finn is evidently the incarnation of the chief deity of the Gaels—the Jupiter spoken of by Cæsar and the Dagda of Irish myth. His qualities are king-like and majestic, not sun-like, as those of Cuchulain. He is surrounded by a band of heroes that make a terrestrial Olympus, composed of counterparts to the chief deities. There is the fiery Oscar *(ud-scar*, utter-cutter?) a sort of war-god; Ossian, the poet and warrior, corresponding to Hercules Ogmius; Diarmat, of the shining face, a reflection of the sun-god; Caelte, the wind-swift runner; and so on.

Arthur and his knights correspond generally to Finn and his heroic band; Arthur's position in history and in popular tradition agrees with Finn's, and many incidents are the same in their lives—their birth and education in obscurity, like all heroes of fairy lore; their recognition and advancement to the throne; their kingly qualities and majestic wisdom; their domestic life, the infidelity of their wives; and so on. The heroes of each nation show also similarities, nor are even the names without a resemblance. Tal-*iesin*, the bard, son of the mystic Gwion, may philologically correspond to *Ossian*, son of Finn, as Professor

Rhys allows. The incidents of the Arthurian cycle sometimes correspond to the Cuchulain cycle of Ireland, as well as to the Fenian. Thus Peredur's ideal of a bride—raven-black hair and blood-red and snow-white cheeks—corresponds to the story of Deirdre and the sons of Uisneach.

A word or two may be said as to the local habitation of the heroic incidents. The Irish tales localise the events in Ireland, and point to places whose names are derived from the incidents of the tales. For example, the incidents of the killing of Diarmat by the boar are located in Sligo; but in Scotland the same story is fixed in no less than two places—Argyllshire and Sutherlandshire; Ben-Gulbain in Argyllshire, and Ben-Loyal in Sutherland have clear topographical traces of the story. And, again, the Arthurian incidents are confidently located by different theorists in Brittany, Wales, and Scotland. Mr Stuart-Glennie has written a volume to prove that Scotland was the scene of Arthur's victories, and Mr Skene supports him. No doubt the claims are all genuine; the story, in fact, is settled wherever a colony of the Welsh or the Gaels settled in a new country. The stories are racial and general, and can be tied down to neither time nor place. Every branch and colony can claim them as their own.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